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HISTORY OF PENNY POSTAGE.

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HISTORY OF

PENNY POSTAGE.

With a Prefatory Memoir.

BY

SIR ROWLAND HILL, K.C.B., D.C.L. (OXON), F.R.S., F.R.A.S., ETC.

VOLUME II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES & SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.
1871.

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I most earnestly request that every one into whose hands this narrative may fall will pay the strictest attention to the notification which heads the title-page, and regard the contents as confidential. For this injunction he will find sufficient reason in the closing paragraph of the Preface.

ROWLAND HILL.

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[*For Private Circulation Only.*]

HISTORY OF PENNY POSTAGE.

CHAPTER I.

JOINT SECRETARYSHIP. (1846–47.)

THE scene of my labours was henceforth to be in that institution which had so long been the centre of my thoughts; and though the post assigned me would, as I knew, give me but limited power for attaining the ends I had in view, I still hoped by patience and perseverance to make fair progress. At the same time, I felt that all my movements must be made with the greatest circumspection, and that, however much I deprecated contest, I must be prepared to maintain it, if necessary; with this view I at once resumed the journal which for four years had been suspended:—

'*December 5th.*—Called on the Postmaster-General at his house. * * * Drove with him to the Post Office in his cab.'

As we passed through Newgate Street, there was a little incident of some amusement. The way being blocked, there arose some of the objurgations usually heard on such occasions against those who, being immediately ahead, seem to stop the way; and the Postmaster-General and his new secretary came in

for their full share. Upon looking back to the source of this vituperation, we found that it proceeded from the driver of a mail-cart, who was thus unconsciously railing at his official superiors. Lord Clanricarde burst into a hearty laugh; showing, what I have often remarked, that men under heavy official pressure seem more than commonly pleased with a little fun.

'On reaching the Post Office, Mr. Cornwall (the Postmaster-General's private secretary), who had preceded us, told me that Colonel Maberly wished to see me. We went together to M.'s room. M. and I shook hands, &c. All three then proceeded to make the circuit of the Post Office, and I was introduced to all the heads of departments. * * * To commence duty on Wednesday the 9th.'

This was at least a satisfactory beginning, but what was to follow? While I resolved that nothing should be wanting on my part to maintain harmony, I could not but form, from the past, unsatisfactory expectations as to the future. How far these misgivings were justified will appear presently; and yet I should willingly suppress much of the evidence on this point but for fear of misleading future reformers. It is important that any one meditating such a course as mine should know what that course really was; so that before entering on his work he may count the cost. How soon difficulties are forgotten by mere bystanders was curiously shown in my case by an article some few years later in the 'Edinburgh Review' on Mr. Charles Dickens's story of 'Little Dorrit.' Few periodicals rendered me more important service than this, no one was more inclined to do me full justice, in none did it seem less probable that the nature and extent of my struggles would be underrated; and yet, as may be remembered, my course was cited as one notoriously demonstrating

the injustice of those strictures on official jealousy which have rendered "Circumlocution Office" a familiar term. Mr. Dickens's very amusing reply will be found in 'Household Words,' vol. xvi. p. 97, and it may be added that it contains a short, but true and lively sketch of my early struggles. Prior, therefore, to describing the improvements which I was gradually able to introduce, I shall endeavour to give a specimen of the circumstances which, for years after my restoration to office, made progress so tardy :—

'*December 9th.*—Commenced duties at the Post Office.

'The Postmaster-General has referred to me by minutes the Railway Report and several applications for increase of force or of salary, but there is some demur in supplying the necessary papers, and the assistant-secretary (Campbell) showed me a minute (referred to in a note which I received this morning from the Postmaster-General, who is not at the office to-day), prescribing the course of proceeding in my department. It appears to be unnecessarily restrictive; must see the Postmaster-General on the subject.'

To show how much this minute was likely to hamper me, it is only necessary to state that it forbade me to demand any papers whatever, or to send for any officer, without first enumerating my wants in a minute, which was to receive the sanction of the Postmaster-General, and then be sent to Colonel Maberly for him to give it effect. As it was impracticable for me, when entering on any investigation, to foreknow what papers or what officers I should require to consult, or even to know what papers were in existence, it is obvious that by such a rule my proceedings would be so clogged as to render satisfactory progress impracticable :—

'*December 10th.*—* * * seem to think that the minute may be converted into a means of annoyance. Johnson, the chief clerk, has refused to show Armstrong [my private secretary] the form of the letter register without a written

order to that effect; but the Postmaster-General learnt the fact, and set the matter right even before I could see him. On my calling his attention to the minute, he explained it to be much less restrictive than I had supposed, and at once wrote a second minute explanatory of the first.'

With regard to the supposed necessity, I soon learnt that not only the assistant-secretary, but also several of the clerks in the secretary's office, could obtain necessary papers without restriction. I must add that, while at the Treasury, I had similar freedom in relation to the papers there, and even to the officers of the Post Office, and I can truly aver that, so far from abusing the opportunities thus given, I had been careful, as indeed the reader is already aware, to avoid everything that could in the least degree infringe the discipline of either department. Subsequent discoveries, however, led me to understand what strong reasons there must have been for obtaining from the Postmaster-General an order rendering access to papers as limited as possible. For, while I really shunned all knowledge on the subject, I could not avoid receiving from casual observation ample confirmation of the suspicions that I entertained three years before as to the extent to which the Parliamentary Committee of 1843 was misled.

Restriction became the more galling because, in the very nature of things, the pressure of work was more than enough.

'*December* 15*th.*—Learnt from Stow that a copy of the minutes as to the course of proceeding in my department (December 9th and 10th) has been sent to the head of each department in the office. This needless publicity is not, I fear, without an object. The minutes desire that a copy may be supplied to me, without naming any other party.'

The reader, who has observed how speedily the withdrawal of my friends from power in 1841 was followed by intrigues to thwart my progress, under-

mine my credit, and remove me from my post, will be little surprised at the manifestations recorded above. At the time of the first cabal I was in the weakness of isolation; this, the second, was formed when I was in the weakness of a novel position; and it will be found hereafter that other such seasons were chosen as times for similar proceedings. I felt too truly that a struggle was to come, and I could not yet foreknow how far I should be supported in it by the Postmaster-General.

I had scarcely got my department into somewhat smoother working, when I was called upon to deal with applicants of two separate kinds: first, deputations from letter-carriers and stampers, suggesting improvements and applying for increase of wages; all of whom, for the sake of discipline, I declined receiving without the express sanction of the Postmaster-General; and, secondly, from persons claiming compensation for inventions or devices already included more or less explicitly in my published plan. The most remarkable amongst these claimants was a lady, who informed me by letter that the plan of penny postage originated with her, and begged that I would be so obliging as to aid her in obtaining due compensation from Government!

Meantime I went to work, with a view to the extension of those facilities on which I had laid so much stress:—

'*January 30th.*—This week engaged chiefly in completing the instructions to the surveyors (by means of which I hope to effect important improvements simultaneously in all the large towns in the kingdom).'

These instructions, when completed, were sanctioned by the Postmaster-General, who, however, thought it necessary that they should be issued under the signature of Colonel Maberly. With the Post-

master-General's consent, the document subsequently appeared in the newspapers.

Of the Reports called for by this circular, about one-half were received within six months, and these gave information as to the state of things in about one hundred and twenty of the largest provincial towns. They showed all sorts of anomalies, though not quite so much room for improvement as I had expected. I was convinced, however, that the very issue of the circular had caused considerable improvements to be at once made.

My progress, nevertheless, continued to be clogged with difficulties :—

'*February 3rd.*—The present arrangements do not work well in some important particulars. I have no ready means of learning what is being done in Maberly's department, in consequence of which we sometimes play at cross-purposes, and there is much delay. * * * At the risk of being considered "impracticable," I must try to put things on a different footing.'

'*February 6th.*—I feel very uneasy at the slow progress made, but, circumstanced as I am, it is impossible to go faster.'

It oddly happened that, two days after the date of the above memorandum, my moral difficulties found a physical parallel :—

'*February 8th.*—Returning to Brighton [where I still continued to live] by the 5 P.M. express train, was stopped by a sudden snow-storm. With two engines we were three and a half hours in advancing three miles from Three Bridges. We came to a dead stand near to the Balcombe Tunnel; remained there till 1 A.M., unable to proceed or return, when, an engine having arrived from Three Bridges, and all the passengers having been crammed into three carriages, we returned to Three Bridges, leaving the remainder of the train in the snow. Sat up all night at The Fox. Next morning, the line being open to London soon after ten, I returned to town. The other passengers, I found, on my return to

Brighton at night, did not complete their journey till 4 P.M. (having been twenty-three hours on the way).'

A few days later, having been invited by the Guardian Society at Liverpool to a public dinner, and perceiving that this gratification to myself might be combined with advantage to the service, I went accordingly, travelling by night, that I might lose no time at my office, and doing part of the journey, viz., from Tring to Birmingham, in the travelling Post Office, that I might observe proceedings there. At the dinner, where I was very handsomely entertained, I took opportunity, in my speech of thanks, to explain to a certain extent the duties and powers of the Post Office, misapprehension as to which led then, and doubtless leads still, though, I hope, in far less degree, to unprofitable correspondence, withdrawing attention from practical improvements to futile discussion. I found it particularly necessary to show why suggestions, however valuable, cannot be suddenly adopted, since, in so vast and complex a machine as the Post Office, which must not for one hour be arrested in its motion, it is indispensable to make such preliminary examination and complete arrangement as will yield full security that the change will throw nothing out of gear, but work smoothly from the first. I showed that, while some of the improvements called for by my Liverpool friends seemed feasible, others could not be made.

Thus, it had been demanded that letters should no longer be carried past the office from which they were to be distributed to some office further on, whence they would have to return, but that the distributing office should receive them at once. This demand, not then new, nor yet worn out, I had to meet by showing that the letters for one office were at such times mixed up with those for other offices, and

therefore could not be dropped in passing, while the delay in sorting could not be absolutely prevented unless every post town in the United Kingdom made up a bag for every other post town, which, as there were then about one thousand post towns in all, would involve the daily despatch, transmission, and opening of a million of bags in each direction, an immense majority of which would contain no letters whatever. At the same time I assured my auditors that I should do my best to render the Post Office as useful as possible, and that I would carefully inquire into all the defects in its management which they had brought to my notice—a task to which I addressed myself on the morrow; arranging with Mr. Churchill, the surveyor of the district, and Mr. Banning, the post-master of Liverpool, for the establishment of additional receiving-houses, a fourth delivery, and several other valuable improvements, and also meeting a committee of the town council, and suggesting various means at their own command for increased convenience.

After a second visit made five months later, I was enabled, partly through use of information obtained at Bristol, which I had visited in the interim, to arrange for the equally good performance by nine letter-carriers of duties which, both by the surveyor and by the head of the London Inland Department, had been estimated to require thirty-five; thus saving about 1400*l.* a year.

At the same time, I took the first step towards the abolition of prepayment in money, by limiting the form of prepayment at the Liverpool receiving-houses to stamps only; the immediate compensation being that by this arrangement the chief office of the town could be kept open to a later hour.

Even here, however, I found old impediments to the progress of improvement; for when I proposed to Mr. Banning to keep open the Money Order Office

to a later hour without waiting for instructions from London, my advice was met by the presentation, though with many apologies, of the Postmaster-General's restrictive minute, the issue of which had been previously condemned, but, unfortunately, not revoked. One consequence was that I refrained, for the time, from attempting improvements at Manchester, lest I should encounter another copy of the minute there. On my return I pressed on the Postmaster-General the importance of reconsidering the arrangements affecting my position before his leaving town, which he promised to do, perhaps the more readily because he was much pleased with what I had effected at Liverpool. The consideration, however, produced no immediate result.

'*September* 28*th*.—Banning, who called upon me to-day, reports that the restriction of the Liverpool receiving-houses to stamped and unpaid letters, accompanied as it is by an extension of time for posting, is working very satisfactorily; so are the other improvements which, not requiring Treasury sanction, have been carried out; but I find that though the Treasury sanction [to certain further improvements] has been received a month, no steps whatever have as yet been taken thereon. The reply to the weekly inquiry made as to matters in arrears has been, that the papers were with Colonel Maberly, and beyond this nothing could be learnt till to-day, when, getting impatient at the delay, I set Armstrong to learn the cause, when it appeared that the papers were not with Colonel Maberly at all, but in the first clerk's room, where they had been "mislaid" as usual.'

This transaction, though apparently but of local importance, I have narrated at some length, because it shows how the progress of improvement was clogged, and how much my time was occupied in watching lest that which I had carefully planned should be marred in working. Other difficulties will appear as I proceed with my narrative:—

'*February* 17*th*.—Requested that he [the Postmaster-

General] would reconsider a minute directing that letters addressed to me by the subordinates shall pass not only through the heads of the departments, as I had proposed, but through Maberly's office.'

'*February 24th.*—Finished a minute calling for copies of many of the periodic returns made to Maberly, to which I have added several original ones, with a view of obtaining tolerable statistics. At present they are lamentably deficient.'

'*February 27th.*—The Postmaster-General is so much engaged in his duties as Cabinet Minister that he rarely comes to the office at present, and I am obliged to defer many points on which it is necessary to consult him. I am much dissatisfied with the little progress made.'

When, however, the Postmaster-General was more at leisure we sometimes got on apace:—

'*March 5th.*—Had a long interview with the Postmaster-General, and got through much business. I never met with a public man who is less afraid of a novel and decided course of action * * *; *e.g.*, a proposal of mine to require the postmaster at Manchester to pay out of his fees the salaries of two new clerks, required on account of his own inefficiency, has been cordially adopted, in direct opposition to Maberly and the surveyor; and this is the more important, inasmuch as my minute is a direct attack on a claim hitherto treated with great reverence, viz., the right of an officer to continue receiving fees (unless compensated), however large in amount and mischievous in their tendency, simply because he has once enjoyed them.

'Spoke again of the absolute necessity of my being better informed as to what is going on, and proposed that he [the Postmaster-General] should direct that all communications to and from the Treasury should pass through my hands. He at once concurred in the necessity of the thing, but proposed that, instead of writing a minute on the subject, he would himself take care that I saw such papers before they left his own hands. I fear that the arrangement will frequently be forgotten, but I could not object to try it. He again expressed a wish that I would not disturb existing arrangements, at least so far as they appear in writing; but on my telling him that the rule requiring me to obtain

papers through him caused much inconvenience and delay he told me in confidence that he did not desire that I should regard it, but send for any papers that I wanted.'

Not liking this anomalous position of things, I consulted confidentially with Mr. Jones Loyd, mentioning also my uneasiness at the slow progress of improvement, and referring to the expectations held out to me through him and Mr. Warburton before I entered the Post Office; expectations which, however, a circumstance just learnt, viz., a large addition about to be made to Colonel Maberly's staff, led me to suppose were not likely soon to be fulfilled. Mr. Loyd, while recognising the expectations held out to me, advised me to press the Postmaster-General, of course judiciously and temperately, to assign to me a department, or at least to leave in my hands till ripe for his own decision all matters connected with any specific improvement which may be assigned to me; advice on which I resolved to act as occasions arose, the more so as it was speedily seconded by Mr. Warburton.

Some other of my friends, meantime, not being so well informed as to facts, were on the point of taking more active proceedings; and had I not accidentally met two of the chief proprietors of the *Daily News*, that journal would have commenced a series of attacks on Colonel Maberly, for which the editor had already received instructions.

I was the better pleased at having thus prevented public animadversion, because I presently had further evidence that I was advancing in the confidence of my official superiors; the Postmaster-General placing the secretarial management of the Money Order Department in my hands, directing that all returns to Parliament should be submitted to me before being sent to the Treasury, with free leave for me to attack any such as seemed unfair to penny postage, and,

lastly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his place in Parliament, speaking highly of my services.

At the same time, I felt obliged to remind the Postmaster-General of our slow progress. I again called his attention to the delay of my measures after their leaving my hands; showed, in short, that all my measures were standing still, and told him I was very anxious to bring some one improvement to a successful issue, a view in which he agreed, thinking, however, that much had already been effected.

As regards minor matters this was true enough, but my continued anxiety was justified by the fact that I had now been nearly four months in office without being able to bring into effect any improvement important enough to require the sanction of the Treasury.

The Postmaster-General having expressed a wish that I should go to Bristol, I left for that city after office hours on April 7th, and as what I found there may be regarded as a specimen, by no means an unfavourable one, of the state of things at the provincial offices generally, I describe it.

The first delivery of the day, by far the most important of all, was not completed until twelve o'clock; the letter-carriers, as I was informed, often staying after departure from the office to take their breakfast before commencing their rounds. I was able to show how at a small cost (only 125*l.* a year) it might be completed by nine. The office itself I found small, badly lighted, and worse ventilated. The day mail thence to London was nearly useless, its contents for London delivery being on the morning of my inquiry only sixty-four letters, thirty-seven of which might have been sent by the previous mail on the mere payment of the extra penny; and the impression regarding this mail, both in and out of the office, agreed exactly with my evidence in

1843, viz., that all day mails, to be efficient for their purpose, should start as late as is consistent with their reaching London in time for their letters to be forwarded by the evening mails. The satisfaction I felt in such improvements as I had been able to make on the spot was much enhanced by my receiving at the termination of my visit the thanks of both clerks and letter-carriers for the new arrangements, and, somewhat later, acknowledgments from various inhabitants of the city of the benefit conferred on the public. In short, I returned to town well pleased with the success of my mission.

To return to the subject of obstruction:—

'*April 20th.*—A letter from Mr. Lettis, a senior clerk of the Money Order Office, written on the 12th inst., and forwarded the same day by Mr. Barth, instead of being sent at once to me, was forwarded, by Colonel Maberly's own endorsement, to the Postmaster-General, then in the west of Ireland, in consequence of which it did not reach me till yesterday, I being all the while engaged on the subject to which it relates.'

The paper thus retarded I soon found was one amongst many, all of them more or less important to a right understanding of the work on which I was specially engaged. Application, however, to the Postmaster-General for the maintenance of direct communication produced no other effect than an injunction to Colonel Maberly's department against further delay.

In the midst of these troubles, petty in themselves, but very injurious in the delay they produced, I saw, for the first time, a fellow-labourer in the great cause of postal improvement, who, in establishing the overland route to India, had surmounted formidable difficulties and rendered invaluable services, without, I fear, securing either to himself or his family any

proportionate recompense. My record of the interview is very brief :—

'Lieutenant Waghorn called. He is a man of singularly energetic appearance.'

Incomplete on some points as was the support given me by the Postmaster-General, I was about this time made very sensible of its value, a report arising that Lord Clanricarde was about to be appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; a report which filled me with serious anxiety for the time, but which, happily for me, a few days showed to be incorrect.

My difficulties, however, were again beginning to affect my health, and it soon appeared that I was not the only person so suffering, my private secretary, Mr. Armstrong, informing me that he did not feel able to discharge the duties devolving upon him, and requesting to exchange places with my clerk; an application which, however, I induced him to withdraw.

I received additional evidence, however, though not in the most acceptable form, of the Postmaster-General's increasing confidence; being requested by him to investigate a charge brought by a clerk against one of the surveyors and a postmaster in his district; the answer to my objection to the task being that he was afraid any one else would screen the delinquent. Eventually, however, the duty was performed by the solicitor.

A means of preventing, to a considerable extent, injurious measures in the Post Office being taken without my knowledge, was hit upon almost accidentally. Upon my mentioning to Mr. Parker, then Secretary to the Treasury, that many of the applications from the Post Office to his department were made without my cognizance, and offering, with the sanction of the Postmaster-General, to go down once a week or so to

the Treasury to assist him in his decisions upon them, the offer was gladly accepted, the more so as the augmentations recently made in Post Office salaries were producing corresponding demands from other quarters; and the Postmaster-General's concurrence being readily obtained, a salutary check was thus established.

This mark of confidence was, of course, highly satisfactory, and the advantage secured by the arrangement obviously one of great value. The same day brought me further promise of support, arising out of the question of that second visit to Liverpool which has already been described.

Yet further confidence was shown when the new practice at the Treasury started a fresh difficulty, viz., as to what was to be done when my opinion was against measures which the Postmaster-General had recommended without consulting me; for, upon my applying to his lordship for instructions, he told me that he wished me to have no scruples as to any measures, but to advise against them unhesitatingly if so inclined.

Notwithstanding this confidence, however, the anomalous arrangement of the department remained fruitful in mischief; indeed every practised man knows that where proceedings are vitiated at their source no subsequent vigilance suffices for their effectual correction. In my case, moreover, vigilance on such points was maintained at the sacrifice of progress in improvement. Parliamentary returns moved for about this time by members hostile to my plans, and demanded in such form as to mislead, were accelerated, while one moved for by Mr. Warburton in such form as to secure a true statement was kept back; and though, by great effort, I procured from the Postmaster-General an order for modification in two of the fallacious returns, yet,

after all, one of them actually went forth with all its errors retained.

After many details on this vexatious topic, my journal proceeds as follows:—

'I feel ashamed, as well as annoyed, in having to record these vexations, and I must put an end to them by some means or other. I would gladly omit these records altogether, but former experience has shown that it would be unsafe so to do. I am obliged, therefore, with a view to my own justification hereafter, to continue them, though I cannot but fear that (should this journal ever be read by those who do not know me intimately) such daily complainings may be considered as evidence of querulousness on my part.'

So long as this twofold authority continued, it was impracticable for the Postmaster-General, unless endowed with a more exact memory for details than can be reasonably expected in a Cabinet Minister, to avoid inconsistency in his own proceedings. Thus after having obtained his acceptance of an advantageous offer from the Brighton Railway Company, I learnt to my amazement that the offer had been refused, examination showing that this was the result of counter advice of which I knew nothing.

It has been seen that errors thus arising found their way into Parliamentary returns; they even affected legislative enactment. In a bill sent up from the Post Office to the Treasury for introduction into Parliament, I had advised the insertion of clauses authorizing the Treasury to relax or abolish the limitation on letter-weight, but at the same time establishing restrictions to prevent abuse of such relief by the public. The solicitor of the Post Office, however, so drew the bill as to supersede the Treasury exercise of this power by a clause making the abolition absolute, and at the same time omitting the proposed safe-guards; and as the bill was never submitted to my examination in a complete form, it

became law with this defect. Fortunately, the practical consequences were not very serious, the public probably remaining for the most part quite unaware of its new liberty or, rather, license. Some wag, however, getting hold of the fact, turned it to account for his amusement, posting in Ireland a bundle of old clothes, directed to London, which being of course refused by the addressee, as the postage demanded was no less than 4*l.* 11*s.*, had to be carried back according to rule to the place of despatch; the double conveyance being necessarily made gratis, as the sender naturally took care not to be known. I need not say that at the first opportunity the Act was amended.

A very far more serious evil was reported to me shortly afterwards; the statement being that a clerk in the Money Order Office at Manchester had been detected in several frauds. My informant attributed the loss of letters, &c., mainly to the absence of investigation as to character, arising out of the system of patronage; he added that he pointed out this as the chief cause of the evil to Lord Lowther soon after his appointment.

To heedlessness in appointment was unfortunately added laxity in discipline:—

'*September* 30*th.*—At * * * the postmaster, who gets 15*l.* a year as compensation for [his loss of] late-letter fees has remitted till lately only 7*s.* or 8*s.* a year [for such fees]; but on a stir being made the remittances at once advanced to as much per week: the explanation given is that he omitted to demand the fee, not that he fraudulently appropriated it; and on this ground he has escaped dismissal, I think very improperly; but I have not been consulted in either case, and know the facts only from conversation with the Postmaster-General.'

About the same time I was engaged in devising means for a partial introduction of the plan of district

offices in the London delivery, but was led to abandon the attempt, in some measure, by the inconveniences attending a partial arrangement, and yet more by fear of serious disorder likely to arise from the imperfect manner in which I knew, by past experience, the necessary instructions would be carried out unless I could myself superintend their execution; and thus it was that several years had to elapse before this important improvement could be made.

Soon after arriving at this conclusion I attempted to remove a strange anomaly which was producing a certain amount of trouble in the office, leading occasionally even to delay in the despatch of the mails. This was that while letters brought to the chief office after 7 P.M. were not received for that night's mail without an additional fee of sixpence, late newspapers were received up to the same time on payment of a halfpenny:—

'*October 5th.*—To-day I consulted Bokenham on the expediency of advancing the fee [on newspapers] at seven o'clock, but he strongly advises against it, on the ground of its certain unpopularity with the press.'

So difficult is it to recall concession, however mischievous and absurd. Eventually, however, a compromise was adopted which, while it greatly relieved the department, proved satisfactory to the newspaper publishers.

I abstain from further narration of mere obstructions, not for want of matter, but because enough has been done to show the difficulties, annoyances, and delays ever crossing the path of my improvements; the like of which must, I fear, be expected by all whose zeal for reform leads them to intrude amidst men of routine.

A trouble of another kind, however, began now to

show itself, which eventually produced serious consequences. Applications for increase of salary, backed by the recommendation of Colonel Maberly, were referred to me for consideration, the circumstances being such that, without unscrupulous disregard of the public interest, I could do nothing but advise their rejection; and I found that in one instance, instead of the applicants being simply informed of the Postmaster-General's decision, which was in conformity with my opinion, they had also been told—contrary to official rule—of our conflicting recommendations; the consequence being a renewal of the application, accompanied with a letter of thanks to Colonel Maberly, and an appeal from my judgment as being opposed to that of "the Secretary." I could not but foresee that if, without any opportunity of recommending merited concession, I were to be held up as a bar to concessions recommended by others, I should, in course of time, find myself in a position very unfavourable alike to the maintenance of my just authority and the progress of good measures. After noticing the above facts, my journal proceeds as follows:—

'*October* 16*th*.—I tried to avoid this collision of opinion, representing to the Postmaster-General the probable result when the papers were first referred to me; but his reply was that his opinion coincided with my own, but that he could not act in direct opposition to Maberly's earnest advice without support from me, consequently I had no escape; luckily the Treasury, as well as the Postmaster-General, take my view of the question.'

Accordingly, I wrote a somewhat severe minute on the subject, and this was approved by the Postmaster-General.

I must add that my foreboding was, on both points, justified by the sequel, the usual course being, for a long time, that the duty of rejecting such applications fell almost exclusively upon me, while the popularity

arising from acquiescence was almost engrossed by Colonel Maberly; the natural, nay, inevitable result being such as to render all my movements at once more difficult and more liable to danger.

Under all these circumstances, it is little to be wondered at that, on a retrospect of progress made during the first year since my appointment at the Post Office, I was much dissatisfied with what I found, nor could I feel surprised that symptoms of discontent began to appear in the public, which, knowing nothing of impediments, naturally expected the fulfilment of those expectations which my admission to office had raised. The greater part of that which had been actually accomplished may be thus enumerated:

1st. Limitation on the weight of letters was exchanged for a far less inconvenient restriction on size.

2nd. For a proposed acceleration of the mails westward from Exeter, at the annual cost of 2000*l.*, I substituted a plan equally efficacious at the annual cost of only 320*l.*

3rd. Exorbitant claims having been advanced and admitted for compensation in respect of abolished fees, perquisites, &c., I made arrangements for such returns as to the current amount of those irregular emoluments as would keep these claims thenceforth within due bounds. The efficiency of this plan will be evident when it is considered that, though at the period of abolition claimants would naturally seek to make this amount appear as large as possible, yet, in ordinary times, when the receipt of large fees might act as a bar to demand for augmented salary, the interest would lie in the opposite direction. All, therefore, that was necessary was to get the ordinary estimate on indisputable record. This had been provided for before I left the Treasury, but, in the interim, the plan had been abandoned.

4th. I arranged for an additional daily despatch from about forty of the principal villages in the London district without any additional expense, and also, at small cost, for day mails to about twenty towns within thirty miles of London.

5th. The time for receiving late letters at the London receiving offices, which had been extended from 5 to 5.30 P.M. in consequence of my representation when at the Treasury, I now got extended to 6.

6th. The rule having hitherto been to regard any mark or writing on a newspaper as subjecting it to letter postage, a practice fruitful in disputes, I procured such relaxation as authorized the practice in cases where a postage stamp was affixed.

7th. I procured the establishment of a third mail on all railroads terminating in London; their arrival and departure taking place, so far as economy would allow, at the hours most convenient to the public.

Limited, however, as these improvements must appear when viewed separately, it could not be denied that the aggregate result was a considerable benefit; and this may explain the fact that, while I was so uneasy at the delay in larger measures, the Postmaster-General regarded the actual progress as quite satisfactory.

Of course, too, in addition to measures actually carried, there were others in preparation, and some in which positive steps had been taken.

In November I placed before the Postmaster-General "a minute for abolishing money prepayment of inland letters at the receiving-houses throughout the London District; foreign and colonial prepaid letters being confined to the General Post evening despatch. This will save the necessity for making out and checking above two thousand eight hundred accounts daily." This measure, slightly modified,

was shortly afterwards adopted by the Postmaster-General, but the Treasury sanction was withheld because the heads of the departments concerned therein, though admitting that the measure would greatly facilitate their proceedings, objected to any except a prospective reduction of force; and it was not till August, 1852—in the postmastership of Lord Hardwicke—that the measure was actually carried into effect. It enabled us to keep open the letter-boxes to a later hour, saved two clerks in the Accountant-General's Office, and at the same time led to economy in other ways.

Finding that any attempt to establish a parcels post, which I had formerly suggested, would raise more opposition in the railway companies than I thought it prudent just then to encounter, I suggested the establishment of a book post, pointing out how much such a measure would promote education, and how acceptable it would be to the public. The Postmaster-General expressed apprehensions of the department being overloaded on magazine days, and I had to point out the means by which all such difficulties could be surmounted. Vehement objections came from the usual quarter, but these were overruled.

I also formally renewed the recommendation which I had made four years before, when at the Treasury, relative to registration, viz., that the fee should be reduced from one shilling to sixpence.

I scarcely need remark that the measures just spoken of as initiated were all subsequently carried into effect; but, before closing the account of the year, I must mention two attempts which have remained unproductive.

Upon an application from Colonel Maberly's extra clerks for an increase of salary, I proposed instead a regular system of promotion, whereby all vacancies

in the establishment should be filled by selection from the extra clerks instead of from without, an arrangement which would have obtained the collateral advantage of submitting every candidate for regular clerkship to a probation in the extra corps. The Postmaster-General seemed favourable to the principle, which, indeed, had been occasionally recognised in practice, but unfortunately I never succeeded in obtaining its adoption as a rule, the real obstacle being, no doubt, that it would have acted as an impediment to patronage.

My second abortive measure I regarded as of great importance, nor has my opinion of it undergone any change; though how far it may be applicable to the circumstances of the present day is another question. Wishing to procure for the Post Office the unrestricted use of all the railway trains, and that at a moderate fixed rate, I suggested that Government, as a means of procuring the ready acquiescence of the railway companies, should include in a bill then preparing for Parliament a provision in their favour, which seemed to me to be in strict accordance with justice, and with the true interests of the public.

In my Report* on this subject, after showing that in order to enable the Post Office effectually to serve the public, it was necessary that the department should make far greater use of the railways, while, under the existing law, owing to uncertainty as to the rate of payment, the excessive awards frequently made, and other causes, such extended use was impracticable, I proposed that an attempt should be made to obtain an Act empowering the Railway Commissioners, at that time an organised Board,

* The Report (dated 1st January, 1847) was subsequently laid before a Parliamentary Committee, and is given *in extenso* in the Fifth Report of the Select Committee on Railway and Canal Bills, Appendix, p. 246. (Par. Pro. 1853, No. 736.)

with the present Lord Belper at its head, to take the following steps:

1st. To issue a general tariff of charges for the conveyance of mails, such tariff to be constructed so as to afford the companies a moderate profit.

2nd. To decide all questions which might arise between the Post Office and any railway company.

3rd. To issue a general tariff of maximum fares for passengers and charges for goods, minerals, &c., to be demanded of the public; and

4th. To revise such general tariffs from time to time.

By way of compensation to the companies, and with a view also to the advantage of the public, I proposed, "subject to such regulations as Parliament may impose for securing fairness towards all parties interested, to adopt a territorial division of the surface of the kingdom, reserving, as open to new companies, any district in which the public interests would be served by the construction of new and independent lines, but assigning to each existing company"—on certain specified conditions—"so much of the district on each side of its line as can be most advantageously served by such company; a provision being made that if at any time the Railway Commissioners should be of opinion that the public interests require that a railway of a given description should be made within such assigned territory, it shall be competent to the Commissioners to call upon the company to which the district is so assigned to construct the line, with the consent of Parliament; and if the company refuse or neglect so to do within a given time, to offer the line to the public at large."

I further proposed that these arrangements should apply compulsorily to all companies hereafter to be formed, but that "each existing company should have the option, within a certain period, to accept

the same conditions, or to continue in its present condition."

The following advantages, among others, would, I expected, result from the proposed arrangements :

1. It would secure the cheap conveyance of the mails, and greatly promote the extension and perfection of the system of Post Office distribution.

2. It would secure the establishment of moderate fares, without resorting to competition, which it is now generally admitted would, in its present results, be as injurious to the public as to the companies.

3. It would secure the completion of the railway system at the least expenditure of capital, and in a manner most conducive to economy in working.

4. It would repress rash and unprincipled speculation ; and

5. It would relieve Parliament from the drudgery of investigating hastily-devised and useless projects.

As regards the interests of the companies, I pointed out that—

1. It would relieve them from the ruinous expenditure now necessary to defend their property from aggression.

2. It would enable them to take advantage of the cheapness of labour or materials, and abundance of capital, gradually to extend the ramifications of their lines to all places capable of affording a remunerative traffic.

And, finally, it would greatly benefit both the public and the companies, by enabling the directors and other officers to devote their time and energy (now mainly absorbed in Parliamentary contests) to the internal management of their affairs, thus conducing to economy, and to the comfort and safety of their passengers.

All these important results, I was of opinion, would

be obtained without any sacrifice on the part of the public or of the companies.

In a Report, the primary object of which was to facilitate the use of railways by the Post Office, it may appear out of place to deal with the questions of charges for passengers and goods, railway extension, &c., but I found one part of the subject so linked with every other as to render separate treatment impracticable.

Had this plan been adopted when originally proposed (more than twenty years ago), the following results, I firmly believe, would have been obtained :

1st. The postal system would have been enormously improved.

2nd. The conveyance of passengers and goods would have been considerably cheapened.

3rd. The railway system would have been far more extended than it now is.

4th. A vast waste of capital would have been avoided.

And 5th. Railway property, instead of being almost a byword for depression and insecurity, would, under tolerable management, have been placed on a firm basis.

Unhappily, the advantage which would have been gained by the adoption of my plan is now for ever lost ; the contests it might have prevented during the last twenty years have done their disastrous work ; but the future remains, and I believe it still possible to amend our railway system and even to adopt a plan more comprehensive than the one just described. My views on the subject appear in a separate Report, which I made as a member of the Commission on Railways appointed in the year 1865, the substance of which, I may remark, will be found in a summary appended thereto.*

* Royal Commission on Railways, 1867.— Report from Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B., F.R.S., one of the Commissioners.

INCIDENTS.

Carelessness in Remittance.

Some incidents of the year 1847, which for convenience I have hitherto omitted, are yet worthy of record :—

'*May* 27*th.*—Mr. Ramsey (missing-letter clerk) brought me a packet containing whole bank-notes to the amount of 1500*l.*, so carelessly made up that they had all slipped out; and to add to the carelessness the packet was imperfectly addressed to some country-house in Herefordshire, no post town being named. It had found its way, after much delay, into the post office at Ross, and had been sent to London by the postmistress. Instances of such carelessness are not infrequent.'

I may add that, some years afterwards, there was sent to the office for the book-post a large sum in bank-notes, the ends of the packet being left open, according to book-post rule, so as to expose the contents. It is much to be wished that all persons inclined to such carelessness would pause to think how grievous is the temptation to which the humbler servants of the Post Office are thereby exposed.

Attempted Robbery.

'*July* 7*th.*—There was a serious attempt this morning (fortunately unsuccessful) to rob a letter-carrier who was taking out a large number of bankers' parcels for delivery. It is said in the office that they contained nearly half a million of money.'

The circumstances of this extraordinary proceeding are thus described in the 'Annual Register':—

From the 'Annual Register' for 1847. *Chronicle, p.* 82.

'July 7. Murderous Attack on a Letter Carrier.

'A most atrocious attack was made upon one of the letter deliverers employed by the General Post Office, named

Bradley. He is one of those whose particular duty it is to make the early delivery at the different bankers and merchants in Lombard Street of what are called the "registered letters." He had received his bag of letters as usual from the chief office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, at eight o'clock, and was proceeding through Mitre Court, which leads from Wood Street to Milk Street. After passing through the gate, which at night closes the entrance to the court in Wood Street, he noticed two or three men in the passage, one of whom suddenly locked the gate; and when Bradley had nearly reached the iron posts in the middle of the court he was struck a violent blow with a life-preserver, which stunned him for the moment; he nevertheless called out for assistance, keeping his bag of letters firmly grasped in his hand and under his arm. The villains, alarmed by his cries, rapidly made off into Milk Street, leaving behind them their deadly weapon. Bradley was severely injured about the head, and being an old man, was, in consideration of his resistance to this attack, *allowed to retire on full pay.* A reward of £300 was offered for the detection of the perpetrators; but as Bradley could give no description of them, and no other person had observed them, the police did not get any clue to their detection.'

I am glad to learn (1867) that this faithful veteran is still living.

Singular Frauds.

In the early days of money-order transactions, it was the lenient custom of the office, in cases where an order had been paid to a forged signature, still to pay it to the right party. This dangerous indulgence did not fail to become known to the knavish class, who naturally made profitable use of the opportunity. Thus two persons, perhaps lodging at the same house, would purposely arrange that an order obtained in favour of one should fall into the hands of the other; and when the latter, by forging

the signature of the former, had obtained payment, the former, applying in his own name, and showing that the signature given was not his, was able to obtain payment a second time. To put a stop to this systematic fraud, which had become a thing of daily practice, it became necessary so to modify the existing law as to provide that when an order had once been paid, even though to the wrong person, no *legal claim* should remain against the Post Office; the practice, however, still continuing to pay the order where it appeared that the blame rested with the Post Office itself. This new rule, though regarded by many as a great stretch of power, not only put an immediate stop to the fraud against which it was directed, but produced so little complaint from any quarter as to make it clear that the previous indulgence had been almost as superfluous as it was dangerous. Nevertheless, the exceptional authority of the Postmaster-General was soon afterwards put in requisition in the following case:

In a large provincial town a person applied in haste at the post office, stating that on his way thither he seemed to have dropped an order which he was bringing for payment; at the same time giving in his name, and begging that no order might be paid to that name until his return, as he would go back to his house to examine whether he might perchance have left it there. Some time after his departure, however, a second person came to the window, saying that Mr. —— had recovered the order, having in fact left it at home, and had sent him with it to obtain payment, he himself being unexpectedly detained. The clerk, satisfied with this plausible statement, fitting in so well with antecedent circumstances, delivered the money accordingly, but was startled a few minutes later by the reappearance of the first claimant, with the declaration that as he had

not been able to find the order at home, it must of course have been lost, and a request that nothing might be done until a new order was obtained. Upon the clerk's reporting what had occurred in the interim, and mentioning the new rule, the applicant, after some remarks not particularly flattering to postal sagacity, announced his intention to appeal in the highest quarter. The decision there made was that in so extraordinary a case the strict rule should not be fully maintained, but that the department must, nevertheless, be secured from loss; this being thrown in equal shares on the two parties immediately concerned; each having shown negligence, the one in losing the order, the other in paying it against injunction.

Petulance Within.

A member of a respectable family, whose name is said to be a corruption of Sevenoaks, applying at the London office for payment of an order, was called on to give in his name, according to rule; and upon his truly announcing it as Snooks, had the window closed in his face, with the petulant remark, "We have no time here for foolish jokes."

Petulance Without.

An angry letter was received at the General Office relative to alleged misconduct in an officer at the Charing Cross office, who had refused to pay a money order, because of irregularity in the signature of the payee. The complainant reported that the ground of objection was that when he gave his signature he appended the term Esq., adding, "The silly fellow does not know that in a certain rank of life every one signs himself Esq."

Amusing Inference.

A complaint was received relative to the non-arrival of a money order at its destination. The person who took out the order gave place, time, and name, all corresponding with the record at the office where the order was obtained; but reported that the tradesman in whose favour she had obtained it complained of not having received his due. Every inquiry was made, but for a while without effect. At length, however, upon closer examination into the proceedings of the original applicant, it was found, to the amusement of all, that the money order was safe in her bureau; she having innocently assumed that, upon her paying in the sum, the Post Office would complete the transaction by discharging the debt; the money order handed to her being regarded as a receipt.

Whimsical Complaint.

It is curious, and would at first sight seem inexplicable, that acceleration of the mails, though effected, solely for the public benefit, often too at great cost, and always with much trouble, led in some instances to angry complaint. Perhaps the most whimsical instance of this was that of a lady in a northern town, at which the night mail from London had previously arrived somewhat too late for the last delivery of the day, so that the letters could not be distributed until the following morning, whereas by this acceleration they were delivered the same evening. The allegation was that, whereas complainant used always to get her letters early in the morning, she never received them now till late at night.

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS DURING THE YEAR 1848.

MONEY-ORDER DEPARTMENT.

THOUGH I have now brought the year 1847, the first which I passed at the Post Office, to a general close, I have yet to speak of proceedings relative to one improvement, which, however, was not carried into effect until the following year. I narrate this at some length, not only because of its importance, but also because it serves well as a specimen of my course of proceeding during the long period which I passed in the anomalous position to which I had been appointed.

The Postmaster-General having requested me to examine and report on the state of the Money Order Department, with a view to its improvement and extension, I succeeded, after much inquiry and consideration, in devising a plan which, while it effected many improvements, provided for a very large extension, and that without increasing the number of accounts with the chief office. I learnt now that a plan which I proposed when at the Treasury would have simplified operations exceedingly, but that its adoption, though earnestly pressed by Mr. Jackson (then at the head of the department), had been successfully resisted; and that though some part of this plan had been superseded by other improvements, much yet remained which Mr. Jackson thought would be highly useful.

In my consequent preparations I was impeded frequently for hours, sometimes for days, by the want of necessary papers, the registration and arrangement being so defective that, according to the registering clerk, his death would leave the office in absolute perplexity. When the papers came they were sometimes exceedingly imperfect, the omission being in one instance that of a very important report; and of course fresh delays occurred while these omissions were supplied. Again, when, in reference to a proposed measure of economy, I called upon the head of the department and his immediate subordinate to support my views by expressing in writing opinions which they had given in conversation, they excused themselves by pleading that they should thereby incur serious displeasure.

The omitted report was one made some time before by Mr. Jackson, recommending an improvement calculated to save the department between 2000*l.* and 3000*l.* per annum. Taking up this rejected measure, I was enabled, after long elaboration, to procure its adoption, and in a few months more its beneficial results were placed beyond question; the head of the department reporting that the accounts were more complete and the checks more efficient, and that the annual saving was even greater than had been reckoned upon; amounting to nearly 3500*l.* Of course I lost no time in procuring the extension of so beneficial a measure to both Scotland and Ireland. I have only to add that I was happy to obtain for Mr. Jackson a well-deserved addition of 100*l.* a year to his salary.

In the meantime, however, these various obstructions, combined with the fact that both in public estimation and by Colonel Maberly's distinct renunciation I was now solely responsible for the right administration of this special department, led me to

take a decided step. I accordingly wrote a minute, proposing that all minutes and instructions regarding the Money Order Department of England and Wales should proceed exclusively from myself; that all reports from the department should be addressed to me; in short, that the secretarial control of that department should thenceforth be entirely in my hands.

In consequence of this, the Postmaster-General wrote a minute on the subject, which, however, being modified by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom it was shown in draft, still left things in an unsatisfactory state. Upon my pointing out the insufficiency of the measure, Lord Clanricarde proposed that I should myself see the Chancellor of the Exchequer. While awaiting this interview, which took place about a fortnight later, I felt so much doubt as to the result, and consequently as to my ability to retain office, that I deemed it my duty to explain to my private secretary and my only clerk that they might have to look out for other appointments. One encouraging circumstance, however, occurred in the meantime, the Postmaster-General having authorized me to promise promotion to two money-order clerks, Messrs. Weatherly and Walliker, in the event of certain improvements recommended by them and adopted by myself proving successful.

When at length I saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer difficulties seemed to vanish. He had no objection to the Money Order Department being placed under my exclusive management, having merely disapproved of the mode in which it was proposed that the change should be effected. He at once recognised the danger of divided responsibility, and, in short, undertook to arrange the whole matter with the Postmaster-General. Four days later the Postmaster-General informed me that he had decided to

place the Money Order Department entirely under my management, but that he wished to consider further as to the mode. He thought of speaking to Maberly, with a view, if possible, of doing the thing quietly.

My new powers were called into requisition the same day by a little symptom of insubordination in the Money Order Department. Confident of authority, I now felt justified in giving such warning to the offender as produced instant submission, with abundance of promise for the future.

The difficulty, however, was not yet solved; for I presently found that the Postmaster-General, instead of himself drawing the minute transferring the secretarial authority over the Money Order Department to me, had remitted the task to Colonel Maberly; the result being such an instrument as would have both crippled my authority and lowered me in the eyes of each of the some twenty officers to whom the minute was to be communicated; and unfortunately this minute, without any opportunity allowed for objection, had been confirmed, not only by the Postmaster-General but also by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The course I took was to draw up a new minute, in the name, not of Colonel Maberly, but of the Postmaster-General himself, substantially the same as regarded delegation of power, but free from all offensive expression and unnecessary restriction, and this I submitted to the Postmaster-General, urging its adoption; but, though he admitted the objectionable character of some parts of Colonel Maberly's minute, I saw that he was disappointed and annoyed at my application.

In my renewed difficulty, I perceived that I must further consider my ground:—

'*December* 17*th*.—Called on Mr. Cobden; described my position at the Post Office, and asked his advice as to the

course I should adopt; more especially seeking his opinion as to whether I should be justified in public opinion in resigning my appointment, if circumstances should induce me so to act. He thinks that, except on some great and simple question, I should not be justified in resigning, as, though harassed by the obstacles thrown in my way by Maberly, I have nevertheless been able to introduce important improvements; his advice, therefore, is patience. He recommends that I should see other M.P.'s and represent to them Maberly's conduct, with a view of forming a party in the House * * *; but I replied that I considered such a course would be justly viewed as a breach of confidence, though I felt at liberty to consult my personal friends, among whom I counted himself. He proffered assistance in any way, and promised to take an opportunity of speaking to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to the necessity of extending my powers.'

The same day, having learnt that a circular to postmasters and others, to give effect to the new money-order arrangements, was in the printer's hands, I sent my private secretary to apply for a suspension of proceedings until the Postmaster-General's further pleasure should be known. This brought the Postmaster-General's private secretary with a copy of the circular; in which, as I expected, I found an unnecessary and offensive restriction; all addressed being informed that, while they were to obey me in matters connected with the Money Order Department, they were not to obey me on any other subject, thus calling on my subordinates to watch my proceedings, and implying a disposition on my part to do that which, from the first, I had most scrupulously avoided. I also learnt that copies had already been sent to Dublin and Edinburgh. I insisted on their recal; and Mr. Cornwall, after conferring with Colonel Maberly, promised the withdrawal of the objectionable clause, hoping that I would then raise no further obstacle to the issue of the circular.

I was obliged, however, still to object to this, as the circular would give effect to the minute against which I had protested, and thus pledge me to duties without awarding me the necessary power.

The result of Mr. Cornwall's application was communicated to me in a private letter from the Postmaster-General, by which I learnt that, though he intended to draw a fresh minute in place of Colonel Maberly's, he had found nothing to object to in the circular, and consequently had directed its issue without further delay; adding that his own view was confirmed by that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of whose opinion he sent me a memorandum. By this, however, I perceived that the nature of my objection had been misunderstood, probably by both.

My journal proceeds as follows :—

'On inquiry I found that the circular about to be despatched retained the objectionable clause. It was not, I think, asking too much to be heard before any irretrievable step was taken.'

However, the Postmaster-General's intention was soon fulfilled; and the new minute (written in his own hand) differed in no material point from the draft which I had prepared. I had also some little satisfaction in finding that, though the circular had now been issued, yet, in the new minute, all authority for the offensive part of it had been removed.

Anxiety as to my true position relative to the Money Order Department being now sufficiently relieved I advanced in good spirits; and, having written to thank the Postmaster-General for his concession, I at once entered on my new duties :—

'*December* 23*rd*.—The newspapers are reporting the new arrangement, each after its own fashion. The "Times" and "Chronicle" have useful notices on the subject; the "Morning Post" tells the world that I have been *promoted* to the super-

intendence of the Money Order Office, but carefully quotes the circular to show that my authority is confined thereto.'

Unfortunately, in coming for the first time close to any department one always has to learn abuses :—

'*January* 8*th*, 1848.—It is distressing to find that forgeries and other frauds connected with money orders are frequent. * * * I have already had to deal with six or eight cases of this kind.'

The subjoined is a striking instance of the economy that may be produced in large operations by even a small change. I found that although the old money-order forms were supplied at a very low rate (about ten for a penny), yet, by reducing the size, I could save about 700*l.* per annum; and this notwithstanding an improvement in the form, which Mr. M'Culloch, Comptroller of the Stationery Office, alleged would involve an *additional* expense of nearly 1500*l.* a year. To remove this objection, however, I had to resort to a mechanical device derived from former experience in constructing my printing machine. This saving was soon afterwards followed by a larger one, consequent on reduction in the size of the letter of advice and the abolition of what were called duplicate advices; both these economical measures having the collateral advantage of diminishing labour in the chief office; while the total annual saving in stationery alone, even on the consumption at that time, was thus raised to about 2500*l.**

Not less important was it to obtain prompt and complete accounts. One desideratum was a complete registration of papers, the necessity for which happened to be exemplified in the midst of my arrangements on the subject by the discovery, in the desk of the late chief clerk at Huddersfield, of more

* At the present rate of consumption (1869) the saving must amount to about 6000*l.* a year.

than forty unanswered letters from the chief office, some of them already six months old. Money-order accounts in the London office, too, I found in great disorder; arrears so long as, in the opinion of Mr. Barth, then head of the department, would require for bringing them up a force of thirty-five men for four years; in other words, an outlay of at least 10,000*l.*, with a doubt whether even then the outstanding money orders could be correctly ascertained. To avoid so great an outlay, I suggested an Act of Parliament protecting the department, after due notice, from *legal* claims on orders issued before 1847; a course eventually adopted; though the practice was still to discharge any claim which appeared to be just; nor do I remember that the restriction ever led to complaint.

At the same time there was prospect of great economy:—

'*February* 16*th.*—Jackson now thinks that other improvements now in progress will enable the Money Order Office to undertake all the additional work likely to arise in the next two or three years, including the extension of the system throughout England and Wales, without any increased force. If so, the effective saving will be enormous.'

It may be added that this gratifying expectation was confirmed by the event.

'*March* 8*th.*—The Postmaster-General, in speaking of the many improvements which I have effected, remarked the singular absence of all complaints from the public, though some [of the improvements] are more or less restrictive.'

I had the satisfaction at this time to receive marks of increased confidence at the Treasury, which, after some compliments, sanctioned all the improvements I had proposed in connection with the Money Order Office.

Among the means formerly taken to explain the existence of a revenue under what it regarded as the

ruinous system of penny postage, the Post Office had uniformly maintained that a large profit was obtained in the Money Order Department. A return now made to Parliament (amongst others moved for by Lord Seymour) showed that, so far from this being the case, the expenditure of the previous year, the last before it came under my control, exceeded the receipts by about 10,000*l.*

A summary of the improvements effected thus far in this department will be found in a letter addressed by me to the Postmaster-General on January 3rd, 1849, which is given in the Appendix (A).

GENERAL PROGRESS.

Having thus narrated the transfer of the Money Order Department to my superintendence, and the improvements speedily following the change, I now proceed to more general transactions, and for their description give the following letter to Mr. Baring :—

General Post Office, January 24th, 1848.

My dear Sir,

I think the enclosed will interest you. You will not fail to remark the effect of the do-nothing policy of 1842, and of all, except the latter part, of 1843. The great increase in subsequent years is owing mainly to the extension of the rural distribution, which goes on with such rapidity that in the last year we brought more than one thousand places within the range of the Post Office system. No one would *now* question the policy of the measure which you proposed, except, perhaps, on the ground that it did not go far enough.

The increased facilities afforded of late years are proving far more profitable than even I had anticipated.

The revenue of the past year will probably be about 2,220,000*l.* gross, and 1,030,000*l.* net. The gross revenue is as large as it was in 1834, and within 5 per cent. of what it was in 1837. The current year will probably give an

amount equal to 1837, thus realising my anticipations of gross revenue. The net revenue will be about 200,000*l.* less than I calculated; but in my opinion the expenses have been needlessly increased to that extent. The same gross revenue as in 1837 was, according to my calculation, to be the result of a five-fold increase of letters; it will have been brought about by a $4\frac{2}{3}$-fold increase.

Faithfully yours,

ROWLAND HILL.

ENCLOSURE.

ESTIMATE of the NUMBER of CHARGEABLE LETTERS delivered in the UNITED KINGDOM in each year from 1839 to 1847.*

Year.	Number of Letters.	Annual Increase.	
		Number of Letters.	Per centage reckoned on the No. for 1839.
	Millions.	Millions.	Per cent.
1839	76†	..	..
1840	169	93	123
1841	196½	27½	36
1842	208½	12	16
1843	220½	12	16
1844	242	21½	28
1845	271½	29½	39
1846	299½	28	37
1847	322	22½	30

* The estimate for 1839 is founded on the ascertained number of letters for one week in the month of November, and strictly speaking it is for the year ending December 5th, at which time 4*d.* was made the maximum rate. The estimate for each subsequent year is founded on the ascertained number of letters for one week in each calendar month (*vide* Return to the House of Commons, No. 586, 1847).

† This is exclusive of about 6½ millions of franks.

'*January 28th.*—Received a very gratifying note from Mr. Baring in reply to the above, in which, though not quite concurring in my comparison of net revenue, he says, "There

is still a great store of undeveloped letter-writing in the country, and I am sanguine enough to believe your estimate as to number will be wrong by being much under the mark." He adds, with characteristic frankness, "What has surprised me most is the quiet way in which the people here take to the prepayment and stamping. I was always much afraid of that part of the plan, and am glad to find myself wrong."'

The following are further extracts from Mr. Baring's letter:—

'As I am writing to you I cannot help mentioning what was told me at Weymouth this year, which shows how, in trifles even, your scheme has been a benefit.

'I was at Weymouth when I was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and busy with you about the reduction [of postage], and used, with my children, to frequent a shell-shop and gossip with the shopkeeper—a man of some intelligence in his way. I was at Weymouth again this summer, and having gone to my shell friend, after a little talk, "Oh, sir!" he said, "I must tell you that the penny postage that you were busy about when you were here last has been a great benefit to me in my way, which you did not, I dare say, expect, and I am sure I did not. I now send my shells all over the country."'

The following is a curious instance of a real advantage figuring as the reverse. While, as already intimated, the year's improvement did not equal my expectation, a return called for by Parliament was so given as to make it appear less than it really was, the progress in gross revenue being in effect understated by about 100,000*l.* The following is the explanation of this anomaly: By the system of prepayment the number of rejected letters had been so diminished that the deduction made on their account from the gross postage had been reduced by that sum, a fact suppressed in the return.* I pointed

* To make this clear, it may be necessary to mention that the gross postage includes all postage charged; and that, to arrive at the real postal revenue, there has, of course, to be deducted from this total so

out the error to the Accountant-General, who at once admitted it, but explained that a corrective entry which he had made in the return had been removed thence by order.

BOOK POST.

The following entries relate to the Book Post :—

'*January* 28*th*.—Went to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to endeavour to remove his objections to the book post. He is afraid apparently of the railway interest, and dislikes the notion of entering into competition with carriers. I reminded him that we did not propose to avail ourselves of our monopoly [I should have said "to extend our monopoly to the conveyance of books"], but merely to serve the public better than it is now served; that no other system than that of the Post Office would reach the rural districts; and pointed out the moral and political importance of enlightening those districts, &c. &c. We had a stout battle, but in the end he gave up, suggesting, however, for my consideration, the expediency, in the first instance at least, of restricting each packet to a single volume.'

This suggestion was adopted.

The difficulties being thus removed, the book-post was at length established, the necessary warrant appearing in the 'Gazette' of February 11th.

At first any writing whatsoever found in a posted book made it subject to letter charge; but this absolute restriction was soon found to be inconvenient, especially to collectors of old books. Professor De Morgan, I remember, found it a little hard that a bar to the use of the book-post should arise from the mere fact that a useful volume contained some such inscription as the following :

> 'Anne price Her Booke
> god give her grace therein to Look ;'

---

much as, owing to rejection of unpaid letters by addressees, or other similar causes, is never received.

and a relaxation was accordingly made; writing, however, being still restricted to a single page. Further relaxation, however, being made in the course of years, it eventually became allowable to write anything whatever, save only a letter, and, with the same restriction, to send any matter, even if written throughout. Some of the later relaxations were made on the recommendation of my brother, Mr. Frederic Hill.

I am sorry to remark, however, that meantime advantage was taken of the new facility for frequent attempt at evasion of postage; letters, small articles of dress, &c., being slipped in between the leaves of the books and, ungallant as the statement may appear, I am bound to mention that the chief offenders in this way were ladies. Sometimes the means resorted to evinced no small pains and ingenuity, exercised for the mere purpose of saving a few pence. Thus, in one instance which I remember, a hole had been excavated in the thickness of an old book—leaving not only the binding, but several leaves above and below, uninjured, and in this hole was concealed a watch. And here, I may remark, that with every desire to give the public all possible facilities, we were often deterred from so doing by the tricks and evasions which too frequently followed any relaxation of our rules; evasions which, even when detected, and when clearly opposed to the *spirit and intention* of the regulation, were sometimes defended—and owing to the unwillingness of Government departments to risk defeat in a court of justice, successfully defended—on the ground that there was no infraction of the *letter* of the regulation. The conscientious part of the public—happily, so far as my experience shows, the great majority—is little aware how much it suffers from unscrupulous conduct such as I have here indicated.

ECONOMIC MEASURES.

While thus carrying forward extensive and important improvements in the single department placed under my exclusive superintendence, and while instituting the book-post system, at this day (1869) in so wide and general use, I found myself, by want of necessary power, debarred, as already intimated, from those more general improvements which constituted important features in my plan as laid before Parliament. I had nevertheless abundance of less profitable, though not unprofitable, occupation in work mostly of a routine character. Here I had steadily to resist such tendency to unnecessary increase in expenditure as seemed likely, if unchecked, to render all my economical arrangements nugatory. I had, at the same time, to seek every opportunity of retrieving false steps made previously to my appointment; some of which were still producing serious waste. Of course, many of the savings effected either way were, individually, of small amount, yet not only were they important in their total, but also the care thus exercised tended to introduce that spirit of economy without which no department can produce its best effects.

Mail Guards.

I may particularise the gradual withdrawal of about twenty Post Office guards from the railway mails, by devolving these duties on the guards of the trains—by whom these duties were equally well performed—a measure producing a saving of about 2000*l.* a year; also the substitution of stamps for money fees on late letters generally, and for money prepayments at provincial town receiving-houses, prepayments involving some thousands of daily

accounts; these measures being taken with the unanimous concurrence of the surveyors.

Receiving Offices.

While the change relative to the late-letter fee enabled us to extend the time for receiving such letters almost to the moment of despatching the mails, it both saved much trouble at the receiving offices, and prevented loss to the revenue through non-payment by provincial postmasters of money received for postage; a loss which I learnt had amounted in the * * * office alone (apparently no exceptional case) in the course of seven years to more than 400*l.*

Scales of Salaries.

Sound economy, I need not say, requires that salaries should be regulated by fixed principles; and as early as January 31st of this year I had suggested to the Postmaster-General that it would be well for the Treasury to appoint commissioners who should establish scales of salaries equally applicable to all the revenue departments, so as at once to remove mutual jealousy and to prevent unreasonable claims in one department from arising out of unreasonable concession in another. Such a Commission was actually appointed about five years afterwards, and its proceedings will be mentioned in their proper place.

Travelling Allowances.

'*October* 19*th.*—Called the Postmaster-General's attention to the urgent necessity for regulating the travelling allowances to the surveyors and their clerks. Pointed out that the present allowance (eightpence a mile), combined with the facilities afforded by the railways, created a strong temptation

to unnecessary travelling; showed that the expenses were rapidly increasing, and that embarrassing claims for compensation would necessarily arise. He is strongly impressed with the necessity for a reform, and promises to attend to it.'

The sequel, though not within the year, was a correction of the abuse, — compensation ,however, being made to the existing surveyors.

Former Prodigality.

One past proceeding, strongly exemplifying the necessity for a regulating principle, is set forth in the following extract from my journal. Rectification was an affair of great difficulty :—

'*May 27th.*—In preparing for my minute on the mail guards I have been obliged to read the papers on the subject for the last eleven years. They show that a scale of wages about two-thirds of that now in use was proposed by the officers of the department, and recommended by Colonel Maberly; also that much lower wages (21*s.* per week) had been paid for seven years to the guards on the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, and that they were satisfied therewith; that the Postmaster-General, in opposition to the advice of his officers, proposed to the Treasury a scale nearly the same, but slightly higher than that now established, and then appointed a large number of new guards; that, owing to a blunder of ——'s [instead of the change being limited to guards on railway, who got no fees from passengers], the option was offered to all the guards then in the service to be placed on this scale, as he admits, without authority from the Treasury; that the Irish guards [who all worked on mail-coaches], without exception, accepted the offer; thus adding at once more than 5000*l.* a year to the expenses; that an attempt was then made (in effect unsuccessfully) to withdraw the offer, and that in the course of a few years the expenses in mail guards were advanced from 10,513*l.* in 1836, to 28,627*l.* in 1841; that my minute on the subject, written at the Treasury in 1842, calling for explanations and suspending further advance meanwhile, was sent to the Postmaster-General in August of that year, and remained

unanswered till September, 1845, and that in the meantime the Post Office was frequently pressing the Treasury to remove the suspension. * * * Towards the end of 1845 the Treasury took off the suspension, and the arrears (about 2000*l.*) were paid. The Committee of Investigation, in 1843, called for a copy of my minute, and of the proceedings consequent thereon, but it was delayed under various pretexts, and was eventually withheld altogether.'

Building.

In the next instance which I shall mention, the saving was more prompt and far more important. When the superintendence of the Money Order Department was transferred to me I found that negotiations were in hand for the purchase of additional ground with a view to the enlargement of the office; and, had the intention been fulfilled, the expense of site, erection, and current charges would have been very large; 4500*l.* being demanded for the land alone. Availing ourselves, however, of the reduction in force arising from simplicity of operation, and, at the same time, arranging that the men, instead of all huddling together, should work to some extent by relays—an arrangement desirable for other reasons—we made the existing space suffice for all purposes; and, indeed, barring some subsequent additions to its height, the building remains as it was to the present day, though the amount of transactions has increased two-and-a-half fold.

Letter-Boxes.

One means of economising the time of the letter-carriers, which I had contemplated from the first, was to induce the public to provide themselves with letter-boxes to the doors of their houses; and I now suggested to the Postmaster-General the expediency

of addressing a circular on the subject, in his name, to the inhabitants of London. I proposed that it should give information as to the cost of change, and offer Post Office assistance in case of difficulty. At the time the Postmaster-General concurred in all this, but doubt afterwards arose as to the propriety of these adjuncts, and I suppose it was this which caused some months' delay in the proceeding, for the issue did not take place till the March in the next year, and then the proposed addition was omitted; thus much restricting the expected benefit. Letter-boxes, however, have become frequent, though far from being so general as both economy and public convenience require. Neither the Postmaster-General nor I imagined that the circular, limited as it was, could give offence to any one; nevertheless, it produced some angry letters, among others, one from the late Marquis of Londonderry, who indignantly demanded whether the Postmaster-General actually expected that he should cut a slit in his mahogany door!

The above may serve as specimens of the year's economical measures, though I may add that many others were in progress when the year closed.

MINOR IMPROVEMENT.

Railway Notices.

The following minor improvement may perhaps be worth mentioning, as being, if not particularly beneficial to the department, at least very economical to that large portion of the public which is interested in railway extension. Railway notices were at that time served personally on landholders and occupiers by the solicitors of the companies, at the rate of one guinea for each notice. The Speaker of the House of Commons (now Lord Eversley) sent his private secretary, Mr. (now Sir Erskine) May, to confer with me on the expediency of having the

notices in question served by means of registered letters. To this there was a very serious obstacle in the fact of the delivery not extending to every house, so that I had to devise means by which this difficulty might be overcome. At the end of four months, however, and in fair time for the notices of the season, a plan which Mr. May and I jointly concocted having received the sanction of Government, the proposed regulations were issued; the effect being to reduce the expense of serving a notice from one guinea to sixpence. I had, in due time, the satisfaction to learn that the plan, as adopted, worked smoothly, though it certainly appeared that some solicitors were in no special haste to avail themselves of the new facility.

NUMBER OF LETTERS.

The unsettled state alike of political and commercial affairs rendered the year's revenue in the postal, as well as other departments, unsatisfactory; indeed, the second quarter's account showed a serious falling off, though in this there was as much of mere appearance as of reality. In one month, too, a fact even more startling, there was for the first time a decrease in the comparative number of letters, the deficit being, however, less than one per cent. At the close of the year it was found that, much as unfavourable circumstances had checked increase, they had not altogether prevented it. Indeed, the advance by seven millions, though small when compared with recent progress, would have been accounted enormous before the time of postal reform. The total number for the year was three hundred and twenty-nine millions; nor could I fail to be struck with the magnitude of the correspondence, when, happening to go to Euston Station

early in the following year, I saw the mail arrive from the Post Office in no less than ten omnibuses. Soon afterwards my journal shews some pleasing evidence as to the growing benefit to the most numerous division of society.

'*February* 20*th*, 1849.—Met at my brother Matthew's house Mr. Brooks, the Home Missionary at Birmingham, a very intelligent, active, and benevolent man. He tells me that penny postage is producing excellent effects as regards the poor, inducing large numbers, even among the adults, to learn to write, and that their correspondence is increased, he thinks, a hundred-fold. He thinks requiring prepayment by stamps (the postmasters being obliged to sell even a single stamp) will not interfere with the correspondence of the poor, who are rather proud of sticking the queen's head on their letters.'

FOREIGN EXTENSION.

I must now speak of the progress made during the year in the extension of postal reform to foreign countries, as also changes in our relations therewith.

United States.

'*February* 10*th*, 1848.—The Postmaster-General explained to me the position of the postal treaty with the United States. Whatever may have been our conduct at first, I think we are right now, and the United States Government wrong. Bancroft, the United States minister, had consented to an arrangement of perfect reciprocity, viz., on each letter either way twopence to each Government for inland rate, and tenpence to the Government owning the packet, when the United States Government refused its ratification; and yet, owing to the absurd secrecy observed on such occasions [by our official rule], the English, as well as the American papers, throw all the blame on our Government. Proposed to the Postmaster-General that I should see Thornely, Brown, and some other M.P.'s interested in the matter, who had applied

to me on the subject, and let them know how matters stand —to which he assented, and I arranged to meet them to-morrow morning.'

I must observe that such hasty conclusions in the press, and consequently in the public, are not so infrequent as could be wished; the Post Office, and perhaps other departments of Government, being frequently blamed for defects and anomalies which they have no power to supply or remove; and I must confess it has appeared to me that we Englishmen have a singular disposition, where the question lies between our neighbours and ourselves, to lay the blame, if possible, on ourselves.

'*April* 15*th*.—Mr. James Lee of New York came with an introduction from Mr. Rathbone of Liverpool. Mr. Lee is intimate with the President, and is anxious to assist in effecting amicable arrangements as to the postal communication between this country and the United States. He admits the abstract fairness of our proposals, but contends that we ought to modify them because, owing to the angry feeling on the part of the people in the United States, the Government there cannot concur therein. This struck me as a strange admission of weakness. I suggested an arrangement which, though equally favourable to us, would not encounter the prejudices of the American people; at the same time carefully guarding myself against its being supposed that I was empowered to negotiate. He caught eagerly at the suggestion, said that he should go immediately to the American minister to consult him thereon, and then see me again. Mr. Lee entirely confirms the statement of mine, on which much doubt has been thrown, namely, that the United States Post Office has no provision for the delivery of letters, and consequently that, notwithstanding their greater distances, they have no claim to a higher inland rate than ourselves.'

Meantime, progress was making in the United States towards such measures as, by bringing their home postal system into accordance with our own,

would obviously facilitate international accommodation; an association being formed at New York apparently for procuring the adoption of my plan in all its points, and the President (Mr. Polk), in his message to Congress, recommending that the variable rate established about three years before should be reduced to a uniform rate of twopence-halfpenny; the same to be prepaid. This I could not but regard as a very complete acknowledgment of the fairness and convenience of uniformity, considering the vast extent of the United States, and that the measure followed a trial of two rates.

An entry of the same day records that the treaty between the two countries was settled. The terms, indeed, seemed to me unduly advantageous to America, but, under all the circumstances, I approved of the concession.

France.

Good progress was making also in France; the Revolution, so untoward in many respects, having at least removed from his office the chief opponent of postal reform, M. Dubost.

On June 21st I learnt from M. Grasset, my former correspondent, that he had laid before a committee of the National Assembly, with my friend M. St. Priest as president, a proposal for a low uniform rate, payable by means of stamps, though unfortunately with no distinction of charge between letters prepaid and post-paid, a modification on which my correspondent, its author, prided himself, as the simplest system in the world. I could not but acknowledge, however, that, even with this defect, the proposed change would be a vast improvement on the actual rates. The Report of the committee, drawn up by "Citizen St. Priest," and adopted on

the 17th of August, an able document, recommended the establishment of a minimum rate of twopence for a quarter of an ounce, with an increase to fourpence up to half an ounce, and to tenpence beyond, the extreme weight allowed to be about six ounces and a-half, the whole scale being nearly the same as that recommended by M. Grasset.

'*August 26th.*—The "Times" of this morning states that the bill for the establishment of the twopenny rate passed the National Assembly on the 24th.'

By this Act money prepayment was forbidden, but as prepayment implied no pecuniary advantage, the inducement to use stamps seemed but weak, so that the economy involved therein was likely to be but small. Experience showed the error, and the post-paid rate was afterwards increased, I think, as with us, to a double amount.

My friend M. Piron obligingly sent me a sheet of the new French postage stamps, the image on which was a female head, symbolical of the French Republic. The confusion of the revolutionary period seemed to be whimsically exemplified in the fact that, of the three hundred heads on the sheet, several were inverted. This packet I received just before the close of the year. A few days later I have the following entry :—

'*January 13th*, 1849.—M. Thayer, the present head of the Post Office in France, called, as he said, to see the father of their improved Post Office system ; he is new to his duties, and therefore not very familiar with details, but he seems hopeful. He proposes to exchange papers connected with the departments. He walked with crutches, having been shot in the foot in attacking barricades in June.'

M. Thayer, I may remark, informed me that he was of English extraction, referring me, for confirmation of his statement, to Thayer Street, Manchester Square.

Belgium.

Belgium, too, was in movement; and in a minute prepared in reply to an application from the Government of that country I was able to shew how accurately the results of penny postage had agreed with my anticipations; or, as I preferred to put it, with those of the Parliamentary Committee of 1838. Six months later, viz., in December, 1848, I received a copy of the Government Bill, which proposed to reduce the various postage rates to a uniform charge of twopence; retaining, however, the lower rate of one penny for local letters. It appeared that the whole number of letters was but nine millions, or about one-ninth part of that delivered in the London district, the population of which is about half of that of Belgium. The people of Brussels were pressing for a penny rate.

When the question came before the Belgian Parliament, the Lower House, rejecting the rate proposed by Government, adopted our own rates; these, however, being rejected by the Upper House in favour of a twopenny rate, the king, upon learning that this modification was producing great and general dissatisfaction, proposed a compromise, which was accepted. By this a penny was fixed as the rate for moderate distances, the rate beyond being twopence. Stamps were to be used, and a penny to be added in all cases where the letter was not prepaid. I have only to add that the results were very satisfactory.

INCIDENTS.

Joseph Ady.

Among miscellaneous incidents of the year the following may be mentioned. The office and the public had long been troubled with a restless ad-

venturer named Joseph Ady, a man who maintained the language and dress of a Quaker, but who, I apprehend, was no real member of the Society of Friends. This person was for ever posting a number of letters to inform individuals that he knew of something to their advantage, which, for a stated fee, he was ready to mention. As all these letters were unpaid, and many consequently rejected, Mr. Ady was called on to pay no small amount of postage; but, by representations of his poverty, age, and feeble health, and promises to offend no more, he had again and again obtained very lenient treatment; while no sooner was he out of one scrape than, by a return to his former practice, he plunged into a new one. On one occasion, having been let off lightly on condition of his entering into a formal written engagement not to repeat the offence, he showed the inveteracy of his habit by inserting after his signature words to the following effect:—

'If Mr. Peacock [the solicitor to the Post Office] is any relation to the Mr. Peacock who, about twenty years ago, lived at [such a place], I can, on receiving the usual fee of twenty-one shillings, tell him something to his advantage."

Presently afterwards he resorted to a new device. This was to post his letters, really unstamped, but each one bearing the mark as of a stamp removed, so as to furnish ground for an asseveration, of course ready at hand, that a stamp had really been affixed to each. It is needless to say that so shallow a pretext was of no avail, and a conviction was obtained against him which threw him into prison, and though, by his usual wiles, he soon contrived to obtain release, he seemed at length to feel himself beaten, gave up his singular trade, and, indeed, soon afterwards died.

Communication by Telegraph.

The following entry records as a wonder what would now be regarded as a very trivial incident :—

'*April 4th.*—The payment of a money order has been countermanded from Manchester by electric telegraph.'

Chartist Movement.

The Chartist movement of the year affected the Post Office as well as other public departments :—

'*April 6th.*—Went to the Mansion House to be sworn in a special constable with all the other officials. Serious apprehensions are entertained of an attack from the Chartists on Monday next, when they hold a great meeting on Kennington Common, and intend to march in procession to the Houses of Parliament to present their petition. Arms are being provided for the Post Office, which is being put into a state of defence, in common with other Government offices.'

At Colonel Maberly's suggestion, I placed my own clerks, and those of the Money Order Office, in all about two hundred and thirty, under his command; thus making a total force of upwards of thirteen hundred men.

'*April 8th.*—Iron bars are being put to the lower windows, and special precautions taken against fire. Goldsmiths' Hall, and other buildings which command the entrances to the Post Office, will be occupied with our people. These preparations, and the excitement they produce, are a sad hindrance to business.'

'*April 10th.*—In coming to the office accompanied the Chartist procession down Holborn Hill, crossing it without difficulty at the bottom. The lower windows and doors of the office are defended by bars of iron and planks. Upwards of thirteen hundred of our people, a large portion of whom are well armed, are divided into small parties, each with its officer, and written instructions have been issued for their guidance. The excitement is too great for much work to be done. About one o'clock the Postmaster-General told me that Fergus O'Connor was arrested, but this afterwards

proved to be a mistake. Another report, which for a while received credit, spoke of the disaffection of the Guards, but about two o'clock certain information arrived to the effect that the meeting had quietly dispersed, and that the threatened processions were abandoned. Soon after four I left, but the clerks and others were detained till the mails had been despatched. On my return home I noticed much excitement in the streets, and nearly all the shops were closed.'

Newspaper Attack, &c.

Though not altogether unused to attacks in public journals, I was not quite prepared for the following :—

'*July* 31*st.*—A most violent attack on me appears in the "Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald," occupying a leader, and a long letter copied from the "Welshman." I am represented as treating the guards with great cruelty, cheating them as regards their retiring allowances, reducing the letter-carriers in Carnarvon, and, in short, in making up my own income by savings squeezed out of the poorer class of officials. I need scarcely say that there is not a word of truth in the attack so far as it applies to me. The dismissal of the guards was proposed by Maberly; I did my best to retain them, though, in other appointments; and as to the letter-carriers, I did not even know that any had been reduced, and doubt it even now. I suspect it originates in my having recently exposed the tricks of a party of guards, who, in order to support a claim for higher wages, sent in a false statement of their expenses.'

My last miscellaneous entry may remind my readers of some more recent proceedings :—

'*September* 19*th.*—A biographical account of Bulwer in "Bentley's Journal" for July last states that, in a speech in Parliament on the reduction of the newspaper stamp many years ago, he suggested penny postage and the book-post. I never before heard of such suggestion.'

I suppose such attribution must have been at least as amusing to Sir Lytton Bulwer as to myself.

CHAPTER III.

EFFORTS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN POSITION. (1848–9.)

In the narrative of this year's proceedings I have reserved to the last some that were of great importance to myself, and I venture to think, through me, to the public service. The discordant action in the secretarial department, so often referred to in these pages, so difficult to prevent where there were two co-ordinate authorities dealing apart with the very same affairs, and unfortunately so needlessly aggravated in a variety of ways, continued throughout the year with but little abatement, and with no prospect of cure; not only, as already shown, seriously impeding, and in some important cases even stopping the progress of improvement, but also acting so injuriously on my own health as at times to make me even doubt the possibility of my remaining at my post.

Before, however, the effect on my health became too manifest to allow of neglect, the two-fold evils of my position, the realisation of all the unpleasant anticipations with which I had entered on my office, had led me to seek the early fulfilment of the expectations held out to me in the beginning, and without which I should not have entered on my arduous task. In reply to my inquiry as to the term necessary for demonstrating my power of dealing with details there had been loose mention of six months; and at the end of that period, viz., on May, 1847, having

become firmly convinced that existing evils admitted but of one cure, I had made my first move in that direction, telling the Postmaster-General that, after six months' trial, I was convinced that Colonel Maberly and I could never work cordially together, and answering such objections as he raised to the needful change; a course of which Mr. Warburton approved when I had opportunity of reporting it to him. Some time afterwards, being called on to prepare scales for salaries, I again pressed my views, telling the Postmaster-General that as the scales I had to propose would disappoint existing expectations and probably increase an insubordinate spirit already showing itself amongst the men, the work could not be safely attempted under divided responsibility, unless there were a harmony of action of which I saw not the least hope. I added that, much as I desired to take part in carrying out my plan, I was so deeply impressed with the dangers to which I had referred, that I thought it would be better to leave the executive entirely with Colonel Maberly than to continue on the present footing. The Postmaster-General, although apparently not viewing the matter in so serious a light as myself, seemed uneasy at my persistence, and said he must consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

About a month later, Mr. Thomas Young, the Receiver-General, having entered into conversation with me on the subject, and learnt my views and feelings thereon, counselled patience, but assured me that he knew the feeling at the Treasury, and that I might calculate on the desired change before the end of the next session.

After the lapse of another month the Postmaster-General, in reply to inquiry, told me that he had spoken to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but without definite result; adding, however, that as I had to see the Chancellor on other business, I had

better discuss the matter with him myself, and go fully into the subject.

I accordingly saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the earliest opportunity; but, after having discussed with him my more immediate business, which related to my undivided control of the Money Order Department, a point on which I was fortunate enough to obtain his concurrence, I deemed it inexpedient to enter on further measures, especially as he was much pressed for time; but I told him that I thought it right to say that the step about to be taken would necessarily lead to further measures; on which he said, "I have no objection to that."

Meantime I had the satisfaction to remark various indications of that increased confidence in myself, on which of course the desired promotion must be based.

Early in the year 1848, however, I saw reason to apprehend that, without prompt action on my part, I myself might be subject to ejection. The clerks in the money-order division of the Secretary's department were alarmed by information that attempts were making to remove me, and all under me, to the Money Order Office over the way, a change which would have put my retention of office quite out of the question. The clerks, whose salary and position would have suffered by this removal, memorialized the Postmaster-General on the subject. Upon speaking to Lord Clanricarde, I learned that some such suggestion had been made, but presently abandoned. I took advantage of the alarm to obtain for those under me full security as to position and salary, of course very much to their satisfaction.

Some months later, circumstances again led me to mention my claim. Increase of business in the London district requiring an increase of force, and this appearing to contradict the expectations I had held

out, I was sent for to the Treasury, where I saw Mr. Parker :—

'*May* 12*th.*—I thought it necessary to speak plainly as to the causes of their not having been realised, and said that so long as they continued Colonel Maberly in office they must not expect any decided retrenchment, and that, had I supposed that he would have retained his position so long, I never would have undertaken my present duties. He seemed sorry to have provoked these statements, and remarked that great savings had been effected in the Money Order Office; to which I replied that it was because that department had been freed from Colonel Maberly's influence.'

This proceeding had close connection with another, which I mention in passing because it shows how inconvenience arose from anomalous arrangements, even where there was no desire to thwart or to annoy. A minute of mine which had been adopted by the Postmaster-General and sanctioned by the Treasury, the object of which was to raise the salaries of a majority of the district-post letter-carriers, had, without any reference to me, been so interpreted as to bar all the superior class of that service from promotion, and it was only by the Postmaster-General's referring to me a memorial arising out of the consequent dissatisfaction that I became aware of the error. I had the satisfaction, however, of obtaining complete redress, the Postmaster-General going even somewhat further than I had proposed.

Some weeks later, I had the gratification to receive for my plan the marked approbation of the highest authority in the Government :—

'*June* 21*st.*—Lord John Russell, last night, in the House of Commons, in enumerating the measures which had resulted from the Reform Bill, spoke as follows of penny postage (the extract is from the "Times" of to-day): * * * "Whilst these great changes have been made, other measures have been adopted, such as the reduction of the postage of letters

to a penny (Hear! from Colonel Sibthorpe, in a tone which provoked considerable laughter). I was about to allude to the reduction of postage in a parenthesis with other measures, but I really think that, viewed as a great social change, nothing more beneficial has taken place in later times (Hear, hear). When you contemplate the enormous increase which has taken place in correspondence, you may estimate the number of persons who were deprived of the benefit of communicating with their friends, and of offering the interchange of domestic affections (Hear, hear). I really think that we cannot overestimate all the advantages which have resulted from that act (Cheers)."'

The more, however, I felt gratified with this evidence of increased confidence on the part of the Government, the more anxious was I made by a communication received three days afterwards :—

'*June* 24*th*.—The Postmaster-General told me in confidence that Ministers had determined to resign if beaten on the Jamaica question, now pending—a result which he thought probable; his object in telling me this appeared to be to enable me, as far as possible, to prepare for the change. I repeated what I have before told him, that his own resignation would in all probability be followed by mine, for that, judging from former experience, I was sure that unless I was well backed by the Postmaster-General, —— would so conduct himself as to render my position unbearable. He replied that he had no doubt I should have much opposition to contend with, not only from ——, but from the heads of the other departments, who to a man were opposed to reduction. I reminded the Postmaster-General of his minute, prescribing a course of proceeding on my part much more restrictive than the actual practice of the office, and stated that, should he resign, —— would, I felt sure, endeavour to enforce the regulations to the letter. I also inquired if the Postmaster-General would have any objection to modify his minute in accordance with the practice of the office. To this I understood him to assent. He says there will be plenty of time, after the question of resignation is settled, to attend to such matters. Lord St. Germans, he thinks, would

be his successor. He has noticed that Lord St. G. has rarely deviated from Maberly's advice.'

'*June* 28*th.*—E. H., A. H., F. H., and I, met to consult on the steps to be taken in consequence of the Postmaster-General's communication of the 24th, and decided what should be done. These family consultations are a great aid to me. Wrote a minute, modifying the one [alluded to above].'

'*June* 29*th.*—Called on the Postmaster-General at his house, and had a very satisfactory interview. He is fully satisfied as to my administrative powers, and offers to leave a memorandum for his successor (should the Ministry resign, of which there is now less probability), expressing his high opinion thereon. Fully admits that the prospect of promotion held out when I entered on office had reference to my succeeding Maberly. That all doubt of my ability to manage the department had long ceased, and that he had repeatedly expressed himself to other members of the Government quite ready to conduct the Post Office with my aid only; that he expected a vacancy in some other department would have been found for M. before this, but that his present post was so good a one that it was difficult to find another equally good, and that Parliament and the public would not justify their allowing so young a man as M. to retire upon a pension. I proposed, as an intermediate step, that I should be declared joint secretary with M.; but, as I could not accept any advance of salary so long as I was postponing the consideration of others' salaries, my salary should continue at its present amount till the general adjustment should take place. * * * Finally, he promised to consider my proposal, and to consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer thereon.'

'*June* 30*th.*—The danger of resignation is past; the Ministers had a majority of 15 last night. Gave the Postmaster-General the minute (June 28th), but he defers decision thereon, there being now no haste.'

Of course I did not altogether concur in the propriety of delay, feeling as I did that every day was bringing new evils: after narrating other proceedings at this interview, my journal thus continues:—

'Called his [the Postmaster-General's] attention to the great

increase of expenditure, shown by an account just rendered for the last half of 1847. It is at the [annual] rate of nearly 100,000*l.*'

In the following August the question was again forced upon me, by a demand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the complete consolidation of the two corps of letter-carriers; a measure involving also the establishment of hourly deliveries and district offices, all important features of my plan. Knowing that the required change, which unless made with the greatest care would inevitably excite great discontent among the clerks, sorters, letter-carriers, and others, could not be safely attempted under present arrangements, I again spoke to the Postmaster-General on the subject of my promotion, but obtained no satisfactory reply.

In the course of the same month, however, I had the satisfaction to learn that the post of assistant-secretary, recently vacated by death, had been offered to Mr. Tilley, of whom, in his capacity of surveyor, I had formed a favourable opinion. Mr. Tilley accepted the appointment, though at some sacrifice of salary.

Checked and encumbered too as my progress had been, a review of it made about this time showed that, however imperfect in its great features, it was nevertheless, in the aggregate, greater than I myself had been conscious of. In fact I found that most of the improvements included in the list of agenda, which I had laid before the Committee of 1843, were either completed or at least in progress.

Still, as I felt it indispensable that my greater reforms also should go forward, I continued from time to time to urge that important change which the condition of my engagement gave me a right to demand; and as the year drew to its close without

any step being taken in reference to my claims, I naturally became more impatient. Instead of the six months which had been spoken of as my probable time of probation, two whole years had now elapsed, and I could not but regard this interpretation of the virtual promise as more than sufficiently loose.

After careful consultation with my brothers, I resolved on making a formal application upon the subject. In my letter, which is given in the Appendix (A.), after referring to past difficulties and previous applications, as also to the distinct expectation which had induced me to accept my present post, after appealing to his lordship as "to my having made every possible effort to surmount and avoid the obstacles incident to my present position," I submitted the following list of the chief improvements (all of them, however, of a comparatively minor character) which, under his lordship's authority, I had been able to effect :—

'1st. The time for posting letters at the London receiving-houses extended.

'2nd. The limitation of weight abolished.

'3rd. An additional daily despatch to London, from the principal villages in the vicinity, established without additional expense.

'4th. As one step among others towards the extinction of money prepayment, the business of all new receiving-houses restricted to stamped and unpaid letters. A lower scale of salaries being also consequently introduced.

'5th. The postal arrangements of one hundred and twenty of the largest towns in the United Kingdom revised and completed.

'6th. Unlimited writing on inland newspapers authorized on payment of 1*d.* fee.

'7th. The public and the department better protected from annoyance and loss in respect of unpaid letters by the establishment of a summary process for recovering postage from the senders.

'8th. The book-post established.

'9th. The advantage of cheap registration secured to the public by reducing the charge from 1*s.* to 6*d.*, without inconvenience to the department.

'10th. An important extension of the time of posting late letters for a great part of the United Kingdom afforded by arrangements [for their reception] at the Euston Railway Station.

'11th. As a step towards more frequent communication between large towns, a third mail per day established from Birmingham and other towns on the North Western Railway to London, this addition being made by the North Western Company without payment.

'12th. Day mails extended to several smaller towns in a circuit of about twenty miles round London.

'13th. The number of mail guards reduced by placing the smaller mails under the charge of the railway guards.

'14th. The service of Parliamentary notices for private bills provided for.

'15th. The despatch of mails at the country offices facilitated, and the late-letter fees secured to the revenue by requiring both fee and postage to be paid in stamps. This improvement is about to take effect.'

I then described the improvements effected in the Money Order Department, expressing my confident expectation that in the course of the year it would become self-supporting,* and by additional measures, then in progress, made eventually to afford a satisfactory profit; stating also that the savings effected in this department had already exceeded the estimate which I laid before the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1843.

I adduced the facility with which the necessary changes, many of them difficult and complicated, had been effected in this department since it came under my immediate and exclusive direction, as affording fair presumption that with similar means at my com-

* This anticipation was realised. See Return to House of Commons, No. 645. 1850.

mand a like success might be obtained elsewhere. I remarked that my appointment to this department had been avowedly to ascertain my competency for practical management, and submitted that by the results such competency was proved.

After adverting to some of the most important and pressing improvements remaining to be made, to the opposition which these had always encountered, to the cautious and tentative process by which alone they could be effected, to the impracticability of carrying on this without "immediate confidential and uninterrupted intercourse with those most conversant with details, or on whom the duty of immediate execution would devolve," or without "the exercise of an influence and authority limited only by due subordination to" his "lordship," I again urged the fulfilment of the expectation held out to me, strengthening my claim by reference to symptoms of dissatisfaction in the public with the slowness of progress, natural enough in its ignorance of the difficulties under which I laboured, but through which I was exposed to attacks which I might not repel, and suffered in my reputation while quite unconscious of blame.

As usual, in my letters to Lord Clanricarde, I concluded with an expression of sincere thanks for the support with which my efforts had been honoured.

The above letter was promptly acknowledged as follows:—

'Dublin, January 6th, 1849.

'My dear Sir,

'The subject of your letter of the 3rd is a matter for more than mere departmental consideration, and all I can do upon it is to communicate it to the authorities at the Treasury. I shall do so without delay.

'Most truly yours,

'Clanricarde.'

Three days later I learnt from the Postmaster-General, who had then returned to London, that it had been forwarded to the Premier, Lord John Russell; and about a month afterwards I heard in like manner that it was then in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Instead, however, of a reply, positive or negative, to my application, I received from the Postmaster-General's private secretary a letter addressed to his lordship from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, demanding the consolidation of the two corps of letter-carriers, referring to a promise of such improvement alleged to have been made two years before, and speaking of its non-fulfilment as discreditable to the department. I need not say that in such promise I at least had had no share; but as the obstacles to this very measure had been set forth in my recent letter, I was obliged to conclude that this letter, though forwarded as already mentioned to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, remained unread by him.

A few days afterwards, however, the Postmaster-General told me that he and Lord John Russell had talked over my letter, but the reported result was only the old conclusion, viz., delay till a suitable vacancy should be found elsewhere for Colonel Maberly.

I suggested two several expedients which, as they were not adopted, it is not necessary to particularize. In short, nothing whatever was done, and though no attempt was made, either then or at any other time, to show any flaw in my claims, I found nothing but delay; though certainly I had as yet no suspicion of the extent to which this delay would eventually be carried.

Ten days later the Chancellor of the Exchequer again, in a private note to the Postmaster-General, returned to the charge, protesting that no jarring

between Colonel Maberly and me could justify the delay, but still showing no sign of having read my letter.

It was easy to suppose the Chancellor of the Exchequer unable to discover of himself the mode in which jarring between Colonel Maberly and me rendered it impracticable to effect what he desired, and to understand how press of business and variety of occupation might have prevented his noticing or remembering my explanation on the subject; but unfortunately his want of information, however accounted for, could not remove obstructions nor avert dangers; and thus, while he applied his spur, I could not induce him to remove the curb. My only resource was again to seek a hearing; and accordingly I wrote to my immediate official superior what was nevertheless intended rather for the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself.

After mentioning that I had in vain sought by reconsideration to find means of accomplishing in my present position even part of what was desired, I suggested that, to remove all obstacles to my promotion, Colonel Maberly should be allowed to retire on full salary, I undertaking all his work in addition to my own, without any present increase of emolument; Colonel Maberly to be of course ready to fill any satisfactory vacancy in another department whenever it occurred; so that, with full allowance for such augmentation to my salary as might then take place, there would still be a large saving to the revenue.

The reply to this letter, though expressed with Lord Clanricarde's usual kindness, was, in brief, a request for its withdrawal; a request with which, after a week's consideration and consultation with friends, I thought it best to comply; notifying, however, that I still urged my claim as stated in my previous letter.

Meantime I was alarmed by a rumour that Ministers were likely to resign on the question of the repeal of the Navigation Laws, as it was thought that their bill would be thrown out by the Lords. I consequently applied to Mr. Warburton, who allayed my apprehension. He expressed great approbation of my letter of January 3rd, and felt sure that I should succeed in the end; offered to use his good offices with Lord John Russell, but was apprehensive that the Postmaster-General might not like his interference, and advised that I should also speak to Mr. S. J. Loyd.

Mr. Warburton's opinion that "I stood well" presently received no small confirmation :—

'*May* 1*st*.—Cobden told me that last night he spoke in the House on the Packet question, taking the opportunity to express his high opinion of the advantages of penny postage—that several other Members, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Henley, the Tory M.P. for Oxfordshire, spoke in similar terms, and that the manifest feeling of the House was strongly in favour of the measure.'

Calling three days afterwards on Mr. S. J. Loyd (now Lord Overstone), I found that he concurred generally with Mr. Warburton; but though he advised quiescence for the present, he recommended that towards the end of the session I should press for an answer to my letter of January 3rd.

Meantime doubt revived as to the stability of the Ministry :—

'*May* 7*th*.—The Postmaster-General expresses doubt as to the result of this debate [the Navigation Laws], on which the existence of the Ministry depends. He says, however, that in the event of their resignation, there will be ample time to consider any arrangements similar to those discussed at the time of the last ministerial crisis for making my position in the office more satisfactory.'

With the importance of the relief to be derived from the long-sought change in my position I was again impressed by failure of health. Towards the end of May I became so unwell as to be very unfit for work, and was obliged to remain almost entirely at home; a little later, at the Postmaster-General's kind suggestion, I took holiday for a few days, a respite which carried me over the next five weeks, when I again fell ill, and was for a week absent from the office, getting with difficulty through some little work at home. Early in August, however, the parliamentary session having closed, I was able to take more rest, and though repeatedly interrupted by recalls either to the Post Office or the Treasury, I was nominally at holiday for a whole month, and really passed nearly a fortnight at Ramsgate.

Before leaving town, however, I followed Mr. S. J. Loyd's advice by again writing to the Postmaster-General. (See Appendix B.)

In his reply (Appendix C.), Lord Clanricarde repeated his former objections to moving in the matter, said he saw no reason to believe that the Treasury would take at that moment any steps to place me in the position I desired to hold.

As the Postmaster-General had sent forward my letter of January 3rd almost as soon as he received it, I interpreted his declaration of inability as applying to its *official* transmission. It was clear, however, that there was to be more delay, and probable that this would be continued until a change of Ministry should remove all hope of my promised promotion. I went to consult Mr. Warburton, who, after some inquiries and suggestions, ended by recommending a direct application to the Treasury, provided that Mr. S. J. Loyd should approve of this course. As I had to await this gentleman's return

to town, I talked the matter over meantime with my friend Mr. Arthur Symonds, who concurred with Mr. Warburton's advice. Soon after this I had occasion to go twice to the Treasury on Post-Office affairs, where, after going through these with Mr. Hayter, who had succeeded Mr. Parker, and with whom, as with his predecessor, through accordance in opinion, I always got on smoothly and rapidly, I learnt that Lord John Russell and Sir Charles Wood (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) seemed to be contemplating some change in the administration of the Post Office, though Mr. Hayter was ignorant as to its precise nature. Upon my expressing a hope that the change in contemplation might be that which I desired, he replied that he knew they wanted to make that change, reporting also a remark on the subject dropped by Sir Charles Wood. On learning this I lost no time in applying to Mr. S. J. Loyd for his advice, reporting Mr. Warburton's opinion in favour of an immediate application to the Treasury, and requesting to be informed as to his concurrence. Mr. Loyd, however, excused himself, on grounds of past obligation and private friendship, from moving in the matter, and though I could not see in what I proposed anything antagonistic to Colonel Maberly's interests, I could, of course, press no further; nor, indeed, had I been acquainted with the fact, should I have gone so far.

'*September* 12*th*.—The Postmaster-General came to the office for the first time since our recent correspondence. His manner was most hearty and friendly, so much so as to render it almost impossible to discuss any question otherwise than in the most amicable manner. His stay was so short that I could barely get through the most pressing business; it is understood, however, that we are to talk over the correspondence when he comes next.'

A week later, however, having opportunity to consult my brother Matthew, I was dissuaded by him from taking any further action at present; and, indeed, my attention was soon afterwards engrossed in other matters.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY RELIEF. (1849-50).

I NOW come to one of the most painful passages of my whole life. Perhaps, even had I been in possession of every external advantage, the trouble and anxiety now approaching would have been very considerable, but certainly by my anomalous position they were so aggravated as to become almost more than I could bear. The call constantly made upon me to check unreasonable demands for augmented force or increased salary had necessarily raised against me a hostile feeling, which was but too ready to break out when occasion offered. To explain how such contingency occurred, I must go somewhat backward in my narrative.

At the time of my appointment to the Post Office, Sunday was very far from bringing to the department the amount of rest at present enjoyed there. Even at the chief office, which was usually spoken of as completely exempt from Sunday duty, more than twenty persons were regularly employed during several hours of the day, partly in sorting out the letters for Government and foreign ambassadors resident in London, letters technically called "States," —which had to be delivered the same day— and partly in doing other work which, under the existing arrangements, could not safely be deferred until the Monday morning. Elsewhere, offices were, as a rule, open during most of the day, not only for

general purposes, but even for the transaction of money-order business. Applications, indeed, began to be made by particular towns for the suspension of this latter duty at their respective offices; but, owing to the various difficulties and objections by which the change was beset, and in particular the apprehended risk of external opposition, no progress was made until towards the end of 1847, when, in consequence of a memorial presented from Bath by Lord Ashley (now Earl of Shaftesbury), then one of the members for that city, the Postmaster-General directed inquiry to be made whether, by extending the hours on Saturday night, money-order transactions on the Sunday might not be discontinued without injury to the operative classes; and a report on this subject from the surveyor of the district having come into my hands, in consequence of my appointment (then recent) to the secretarial management of the Money Order Department, I drew up a minute (January 27th, 1848), advising that such suspension should be tried, and suggesting that in the event of its success a similar arrangement might be extended to other towns; and the Postmaster-General having adopted this recommendation, the Bath office was closed on the Sunday for money-order business, though still remaining open for ordinary purposes nine hours on that day, as before.

Even thus limited, however, the alteration excited alarm in the minds of those who regarded it as the forerunner of other restrictions, and within a month a memorial against further change was presented by Viscount Duncan, the other member for the city, signed by the mayor and nearly five thousand other persons, "Clergymen, officers of the navy and army, gentlemen, members of the various professions and trades, and others."

It thus appeared that, important as it was to afford

Sunday relief, movement for the purpose, if not cautiously made, might excite opposition, perhaps too strong to be overcome. The difficulty, too, was increased by unreasonableness and even absurdity in some of the demands put forth; as, for instance, one for the complete stoppage on their route of the mail-trains and all other vehicles in the mail-service, from midnight on Saturday till midnight on Sunday.

As, however, the Sunday suspension of money-order business at Bath appeared on trial to produce no public inconvenience, I recommended, after due inquiry, its extension, first to Leeds, and afterwards to Birmingham, these towns having likewise presented memorials on the subject; and in both cases my recommendation was adopted by the Postmaster-General.

Before, however, either of these two latter changes was actually made, inquiries instituted at my suggestion were made through the surveyors, for the purpose of ascertaining whether a similar change might not be safely made throughout England and Wales; the intention being subsequently to extend it, if practicable, throughout the United Kingdom; and, on the receipt of the Surveyors' reports, I felt justified in recommending the former of these measures, which was accordingly carried into effect at the commencement of 1849; thus, in one day, relieving from money-order duty four hundred and fifty offices, many of which had been previously open for that purpose during the whole Sunday, just as on ordinary days. Three months later, the experiment still proving successful, the measure was extended to Ireland and Scotland, relieving two hundred and thirty-four additional offices, and making the Sunday suspension of money-order business complete.

Meantime, also, I was taking steps for bringing all other Sunday work in the provincial offices within

narrower limits. In October, 1848, I submitted a minute suggesting that inquiry should be made as to Sunday proceedings at the offices in Scotland (where restriction had always been carried further than in England), and how far such arrangements were found satisfactory to the public and the department; and the information thence derived led me to hope that the English offices might be closed at least during the hours of divine service, and the Sunday deliveries limited in all cases to one. I consequently suggested that the opinion of the surveyors should be ascertained on these points, at the same time recommending that the offices should in the first instance be closed from ten to five (except for the receipt and despatch of any mails in the interval), and leaving any extension of these hours to be determined by future experience.

The Reports of the surveyors concurred in strongly recommending the adoption of the proposed improvements; not, however, without showing some apprehensions of inconvenience, and consequent complaints, from the proposed restriction to one delivery; plurality of deliveries on the Sunday proving then much more common than I had supposed.

Still, I was of opinion that, with whatever inconvenience the improvements might be attended, they would be accepted by the public if accompanied by another measure conferring an equivalent advantage. Such a measure was at that time under consideration, and had long been regarded as a desideratum, viz., the transmission of the "forward letters" * through London on the Sunday, with a view to their delivery on the Monday morning; a measure which I felt confident might be effected, not only without any addition to Sunday labour, but, even when taken in

* "Forward letters" are letters coming from one post town to a second, for despatch to a third.

all its bearings, with a great reduction thereof; nay, more, I saw reason to believe that, even in the London office, on which alone the labour of such transmission would fall, the improvement might eventually be made to yield similar relief; an anticipation fully confirmed by experience.

Accordingly I took an early opportunity of consulting the Postmaster-General on the subject. I found that he concurred in my views, but wished to consult Lord John Russell before anything was done. This was on January 9th, 1849, and six days later he informed me that Lord John Russell had no objection to consider the question, and wished to see the proposed plan. With the help of my brother Arthur, I prepared a careful statement on the subject, which was sent in without delay.

A few days later, Lord John Russell having approved of the plan for transmitting the forward letters through London on the Sunday, I again got my brother Arthur's help, and threw my memorandum into the form of a minute; and as it fully explains the grounds on which I proceeded in this important matter, I insert it at length in the Appendix (D.), giving here the following summary.

After referring to the suspension of money-order business on Sunday, I reported that investigations made showed that a further very important relief as related to Sunday work might be effected in all the provincial offices, but that the consideration of this question was closely connected with the Sunday transmission of letters through London, a measure which had been urged by various authorities, and which was the more important because the number of letters to which it related had advanced within the last thirteen years by ten-fold.

I next pointed out that the evil of detention had been found so serious that in several cases the rule had been evaded, either by making use of other existing channels, or by the actual establishment of Sunday cross-posts, an expedient which, besides its other evils, obviously involved additional Sunday work.

After pointing out that the present Sunday duties at the chief office ordinarily occupied twenty-six persons for six hours, even a greater force being sometimes required, I proposed, with a view of diminishing the amount of Sunday work in the department as a whole—provincial as well as metropolitan—that the existing mail trains should bring up on the Sunday, in addition to the present bags, the forward stamped letters, excluding, however, all other missives, so that there might be neither any possibility of a Sunday delivery of letters to the London public nor any unnecessary addition to the Sunday accounts.

To prevent any infringement on the hours of divine service, I proposed that the whole interval from 10 A.M. till 5 P.M. should be left perfectly free, and that the same arrangement should be extended, as far as possible, to the duties already existing.

After glancing at the obvious fact that for any temporary increase in force required at the chief office there would be at least a large and permanent set-off elsewhere, I pointed out that the existing arrangements led to a great amount of Sunday despatch and delivery in the provinces, and consequently of Sunday letter-writing and letter-reading there; so that, in respect of general supersession of Sunday work, the balance would be in favour of the proposed plan.

I further stated that there were means by which, after the contemplated change, it would be possible

to reduce the Sunday labour even at the chief office considerably below even its actual amount.

I next stated the large reduction in Sunday labour which in a recent minute I had proposed at the provincial offices of England and Wales, again advised its adoption, and its extension in some of its features to Ireland and Scotland; adding that its effect would be to "release a very large number of persons now engaged even during the hours of divine service," and thus to "afford to many hundreds, perhaps even to some thousands, needful rest, and the opportunity of attending the services of the day."

This minute was referred by the Postmaster-General to Colonel Maberly, who, as I had the satisfaction of learning two days later, promptly declared his intention to report in favour of the measure, saying that it ought to have been adopted long ago. This he accordingly did, and I have the pleasure to say that, amidst the troubles which subsequently arose from the measure, Colonel Maberly stood by his first decision.

About three weeks later the "Lord's Day Society" applied to me to receive a deputation, with a view to the total cessation of Post Office business on the Sunday, stating that they were referred to me by the Postmaster-General. As Lord Clanricarde was then out of town, I wrote to him for instructions, feeling, meantime, no small perplexity, because I well knew that, on the one hand, resistance to the expected demand would expose me to obloquy, and that, on the other, concession would soon produce such an uproar throughout the country as must seriously annoy the Government, and, moreover, raise obstacles to those practical measures of Sunday relief which were already in progress.

However, the Postmaster-General having inti-

mated that I should receive the deputation, I called at the Treasury to urge immediate sanction to my last measures on the subject, but found the Chancellor of the Exchequer too much occupied to attend to the business.

'*March 30th.*—Received the deputation from the "Lord's Day Society," consisting of Mr. Cowan, M.P. for Edinburgh, General MacInnes, three clergymen, and others. They had prepared a plan for stopping the mails throughout the kingdom from midnight on Saturday till midnight on Sunday, but I had no great difficulty in satisfying most of them that any attempt of the kind would excite much angry opposition, and consequently that it would be much better, at first, at least, to aim at such improvements as most people would concur in.'

Any impression, however, which I might have made soon faded away, the Society within three weeks again urging their plan, under the erroneous notion that they had found an answer to my objection, and pressing me to undertake it, "as the only man capable of giving it effect." Of course I could only point out the error and decline their request.

'*August 7th.*—Summoned to the Treasury. Mr. Hayter tells me that he read my minute on the Sunday work aloud to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; that both considered it a very able paper, and that the measure had been sanctioned.'

Measures were thus in progress for giving a vast amount of Sunday relief throughout the country; much had been already done, more awaited only necessary preparation, and, judging by the past, I saw reasonable ground to hope that the completion of this would open the way, as eventually it did, to yet further benefit. Of course I could not but be aware that the important change now preparing had in it an element of danger; the transit of letters through London on the Sunday, if

taken alone, would necessarily be considered as an increase of Sunday work, the more so as the "practical officers" maintained, contrary to my opinion, that at least a temporary addition to the present force was essential to the plan; and it was to be feared that London would be more struck with a slight increase of Sunday employment in its own office than with any decrease, however great, in all the other offices of the kingdom; and that if London should sound the alarm on a subject where Englishmen feel rather than think, an angry excitement would spread throughout the country; an evil so formidable as to require that every precaution should be taken against it. Above all, it was desirable that no partial rumour should precede the complete enunciation of the plan; since its sole chance of ready acceptance, and indeed its true justifiability, depended upon its character as a whole. Consequently, every one of those to whom knowledge was necessarily intrusted had been strictly enjoined to secresy. Unhappily, there must have been treachery in the camp; not that I ever had the means of fixing this charge on any individual, or that I ever was solicitous to do so; but while of the fact there was abundant evidence, the past had so far established its probability as to make positive evidence almost superfluous.

On September 27th my wife and I, by way of keeping the twenty-second anniversary of our wedding, had taken a walk together as far as Hendon, but after spending some time pleasantly there, found the rest of our pleasure marred by rumours of approaching trouble—rumours too well confirmed on the following day.

'*September 28th.*—The newspapers this morning are full of the most absurd statements as to the Sunday duties' measure, which, in several, is violently attacked as a desecration of

the Sabbath, and so on. The "Herald" and the "Record" profess to give very circumstantial statements of what I have said and done in the matter, but these are pure inventions. The clerks in the Inland Office have signed a memorial to the Postmaster-General, remonstrating against the measure, as though it were intended to require their attendance on a Sunday, and expressing a pious horror of so doing. The facts being that some who have signed the memorial already attend throughout the day, while the additional duties will be so arranged as to leave the clerks at liberty from ten till five; few will be wanted, and those are to be volunteers. A deputation of these fellows has been to the Bishop of London [Dr. Blomfield], and it is said to the Lord Mayor also; both of whom have taken up their case. I fear the whole proceeding is another manifestation of that insubordination and desire to thwart my plans which unquestionably exist. * * * Wrote to the Postmaster-General, who left London yesterday morning for Portumna, stating how matters stood, and made arrangements with Tilley for the immediate issue of the notices to the public, as the most effectual means of allaying the storm. They will appear in the papers to-morrow morning, and will be distributed all over the kingdom by to-morrow night's mails. A contradiction from authority which I sent appears in the evening papers.'

The statement that the Lord Mayor had proceeded in this questionable manner proved to be untrue, but of the Bishop's part in the matter there was no doubt; and I could not but think it strange that one who had himself to exercise authority and maintain discipline should feel warranted, on an *ex-parte* statement, without even ascertaining whether this extraordinary appeal had been preceded by proper application to immediate authority, to give the sanction of his high authority to a proceeding which, if initiated by his own clergy, he would justly have regarded as irregular and insubordinate.

As usual in difficulties, I sought aid from my own family:—

'*September* 29*th.*—Matthew having fortunately returned home, I have the advantage of his advice and assistance. We went to the office together, and in the course of the day were joined by Arthur. The contradiction and notice have had a good effect, but the excitement has by no means subsided. The "Times" has a leader written evidently by some one who has seen my minute (probably at the Treasury), partly defending, partly attacking the plan. * * * Strange enough, there is an able and earnest defence in the "Morning Post." Sent a confidential letter to the editor of the "Times," supplying the information which he so sadly lacks, and wrote again to the Postmaster-General. The Lord Mayor has called a meeting for Wednesday.'

'*October* 1*st.*—Went to the Treasury. Hayter treats the opposition to the new arrangement of Sunday duties as a matter of no importance. I think he is mistaken. I advise the publication of the minutes on the subject. He will consult with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.'

In an able article, which appeared in the 'Times' about six months later, and which is quoted in its proper place, the delusion of the day is justly compared to the infatuation which, two hundred years ago, overspread England, led to such fearful injustice, and produced so much unmerited suffering, from the calumnious breathings of so coarse a miscreant as Titus Oates. Doubtless two centuries had not passed away for nothing; a great amelioration of manners had taken place, both in deceivers and in deceived; but, great as was the difference in degree, the present movement was in kind the same thing again; history repeating itself. Only let the accusation be monstrous enough, the asseveration sufficiently bold, and the invention of circumstances tolerably plausible, there is still a large fraction of the public to whom disproof is for a time impossible of reception; the mist of error so entirely blinding that the most glaring correctives pass unnoticed—nay, unseen; while there is another class, perhaps almost equally large, which hides its better knowledge, overawed by general prejudice;

so that while denunciation is clamorous and confident, defence is but slow, feeble, and timorous.

'*Same day.*—Mr. ——, M.P. for ——, called in consequence of the note from Matthew. He says that he was about to engage actively in the opposition, not knowing that the measure was mine; that he shall now do no more than is necessary to satisfy his constituents, but that he must go with the stream. The Methodists, he says, are organising an opposition throughout London, and all the metropolitan members must join in it. Showed him in confidence my minute. He strongly advises its immediate publication.'

'*October 2nd.*—Matthew and I went early to Mr. Hayter's house to put him in possession of the information afforded by Mr. ——, keeping back the name of our informant, and to press for the publication of the minute. He still thinks lightly of the matter, but he will speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who comes to town to-day to attend a Cabinet Council to decide, as H. says, "whether we shall go to war with Russia."'

We afterwards called together on an old and valued friend in the City, hoping that we might rely on him, as one frequently taking part in public affairs, to speak in defence of the measure at the meeting convened by the Lord Mayor.

'We were surprised to find that even he had adopted the current notions about the plan, and that, after we had in confidence shown him the minute, he was by no means cordial in his approval.

'*Same day.*—Went to the Treasury. The Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks it unnecessary to publish the minute. Hayter is confident the Government will not give way; but I fear that as they do nothing to stem the tide, they will eventually give way to it. However, I can do no more.'

'*October 3rd.*—The Lord Mayor came to the office just before the hour for the City meeting. He gives much such an account of things as ——, and says that, if Lord John Russell persists, he will certainly lose his seat for the City. Gave the Lord Mayor some information to use at the

meeting. He told me that the deputation of clerks did come to him, and that he reprimanded them for so doing.'

The City meeting was unanimous against the measure; the agitation was evidently very powerful, and the most absurd and erroneous statements were abroad. One circumstance, however, gave partial explanation of the stir. We all know that in the heat of debate, as well as in the heat of wine, suppressed feelings are apt to come forth; and some of the speeches at this meeting showed, not very obscurely, a motive to agitation of which I was not previously aware, and which certainly assorted but ill with the religious considerations so much dwelt upon. It appeared that, by the existing arrangements, the London merchant occasionally got his letters from the East or West Indies or other distant places on Monday morning, while the Liverpool merchant did not get his till Monday evening; so that there was an interval of which, by the aid of the telegraph, the London merchant could take advantage for his special benefit. By the change contemplated, the two deliveries would be made at the same time, and the local advantage be therefore lost. I must not be supposed to attribute this low motive to the meeting generally, still less to the public at large, though probably it had its influence on more than would have been willing to acknowledge it even to themselves. As we proceed, too, it will be manifest that other motives were at work of an order but little more elevated. Meantime, as Government intended, notwithstanding the clamour, to go forward with the measure, it was necessary promptly to secure the means.

'*Same day.*—Pressed on Tilley the necessity of ascertaining, without delay, what volunteers could be obtained from the men; begging at the same time that no compulsion whatever might be used.'

Of course the sole ground of complaint from the clerks and letter-carriers was the expectation, real or pretended, that Sunday attendance would be compelled. Such an expedient had never entered into my mind; for, first, I should have held such compulsion too high a price to pay for the advantage; and, secondly, I anticipated no difficulty whatever in obtaining volunteers.

'*Same day.*—Received a letter from the Postmaster-General, expressing an opinion that the steps taken will soon put the public right. Wrote in reply.'

Three days later, being asked by Colonel Maberly if it was my intention that none but volunteers should be taken, and being urged by Mr. Bokenham (the head of the department immediately concerned) to allow of compulsion, with a warning that otherwise men would hardly be procured, I replied that I would rather give up the measure than compel a single man to attend. On the morrow I had again support from a very important quarter:—

'*October 5th.*—The "Times" this morning has an able defence, founded chiefly on the information supplied in my letter to the Editor.'

But pending the beneficial effect which such articles might gradually produce upon the middle classes, the state of mind in the class whence letter-carriers and messengers are drawn remained matter of anxiety; on the same day there was a straw to show which way the wind was blowing; and however ludicrous the incident appears now that the storm is passed, it was not half so funny at the moment.

'The excitement against the measure (or rather against that which has been falsely stated to be the measure), and I fear against myself individually, is becoming popular. To-day Sir John Easthope saw in the street a boy [selling ginger-beer] with a placard round his hat inscribed "Anti-Rowland Hill Pop."'

The following day, however, brought more support from the press :—

'*October 6th.*—The "Morning Chronicle" has an able defence of the measure, so had the "Globe" of last night; indeed, the whole of the daily press, except the "Morning Herald" (which is rabid) and the "Standard," is, I believe, on the right side.'

This was immediately followed by support from a quarter of yet more direct importance :—

'*Same day.*—Received a summons to attend the Chancellor of the Exchequer at half-past twelve. Maberly also was summoned. We were shown into separate waiting-rooms, and Maberly was called in first. In about a quarter of an hour I was called in also. Hayter was present. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and Hayter both spoke in strong terms of the excellence of the measure and the folly of the opposition. Maberly also concurred. They spoke of the misconduct of the clerks in such a manner as appeared to imply blame to M. for not maintaining better discipline. M. defended himself by saying that he was out of town at the time, and that three years ago the letter-carriers were allowed time after time to send deputations to Mr. Thomas Duncombe, M.P. * * * * After some discussion and inquiry the Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote a letter to Lord John Russell, containing a brief statement of the main facts of the case, which he read to us, at the same time adding that Lord John will decide whether to give way to the clamour or not.'

At the same conference I had to report that as yet only three volunteers had come forward for the new work; but, again expressing my strong objection to compulsion, I mentioned a device by which I was confident the work might be performed by unpractised hands; and, though Colonel Maberly still preferred compulsion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer authorized an experimental trial of the plan, which, with the aid of two of my nephews, I made without delay, and in two days carried so far as to obtain satis-

factory results; a fact, doubtless, not lost on the regular force.

'*October 9th.*—In the course of the day went to the Treasury to report progress. Saw Hayter, who sent in a note to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (a Cabinet sitting at the time) containing my report.'

'*October 10th.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer sent for me, Lord John Russell having decided that the minute shall be published forthwith. * * * I fear the publication will be too late. A large deputation waits on Lord John Russell and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to-morrow, and the Postmaster-General is summoned to town.'

'*October 11th.*—The minute appears in all the morning papers except the "Times."'

The time appointed for the actual change being now close at hand, definite and binding arrangements were indispensable. The duties were accordingly divided by mutual agreement amongst Mr. Tilley, Mr. Bokenham, and myself; about three-fourths of the work, viz., all the sorting, falling to my share. I was, however, confident of success, as by this time a large number of volunteers had come forward, so that we had to make a selection, the men chosen being principally from the secretary's office. The readiness to volunteer from this division of the service proceeded, as I had the gratification to earn, from a step taken by Colonel Maberly, who, calling his clerks together, addressed them in a speech in which he pointed out that the department was in danger through unjust attacks, and called upon them to stand forth in its defence.

'In the evening the Postmaster-General came to the office, having arrived in town late last night, and met the deputation. Reporters were present, and reports will, no doubt, appear in the morning papers. The deputation, the Postmaster-General says, pressed for a postponement of the measure, pleading that they had scarcely had time to read

the minute; and after they left it was decided to delay the change for a fortnight. * * * We discussed the question of compulsion, towards which I find the Postmaster-General inclined; but here again I found him uninformed as to the facts of the case. He was not aware either that the clerks now engaged on Sunday are volunteers, or that a sufficient number of men for the new duties had come forward. I entreated him not to resort to compulsion, telling him that I had authorized others to say that none would be employed except volunteers, and pointing out that any compulsion would give the men a real grievance, whereas at present their case rested entirely on misrepresentation.'

'*October* 12*th*.—The best report on the deputation is in the "Morning Chronicle," which also contains an able leader in favour of the measure.'

On the morrow I conferred again with the Postmaster-General relative to arrangements for the next Sunday, when he communicated to me, in strict confidence, that he feared there was a decided leaning towards the insubordinate men on the part of certain important officials whom he named.

'We again discussed the question of compulsion, and the Postmaster-General promised that no compulsion should be resorted to if the work could be done by volunteers on Bokenham's plan or on mine.'

After recording these transactions, my journal thus continues :—

'It is impossible to notice all the proceedings of the week, nor is it necessary. The accounts of meetings to protest against the measure, and the gross falsehoods which have been promulgated in order to get up a case, will be found in the "Morning Herald;" * * * the real facts appearing in my published minute, and in the statements of Ministers on receiving the deputation of Wednesday.'

It is remarkable that while the only firm stand against compulsion was made by myself, it was upon me that the blame of this imaginary compulsion

was chiefly laid; against me that the most unscrupulous asseverations were uttered, and the bitterest reproaches directed. I had been for a long time earnestly and successfully engaged in reducing the Sunday labour of the department throughout the United Kingdom; hundreds of persons, through measures adopted on my recommendation, had been released from the greater part of their Sunday duty; I had, in fact, been strenuously, though quietly, doing the very work of the Lord's Day Society; and now, because a further important measure in the same direction required a small temporary addition to the Sunday force of the London office alone, this even being so arranged as that all engaged would be released from duty an hour before the usual time for the commencement of Divine Service, I was denounced as the chief enemy to the due observance of the Sunday, and charged with a wicked intention to compel, where, on the contrary, I was doing my very best to prevent compulsion. These attacks, too, so painful and injurious to myself, were no less endangering the great measure of relief which I was striving to carry through. As I have said, the public could not yet think—it only felt. Under such circumstances I was bound to be most heedful lest any act or even acquiescence on my part, real or apparent, might give or seem to give ground, however slight, for just imputation.

Mr. Bokenham had twice applied to me to obtain for him a peremptory order from the Postmaster-General to carry out the measure; adding that, if this were done, he felt sure his men would come forward from good-feeling towards himself. This I had, of course, refused; but it now occurred to me (October 13th) that if the order were accompanied with permission to select volunteers, not only from within the office but also, if necessary, from the world

at large, Mr. Bokenham's desire might be safely granted, since it was impossible that, with so wide a choice, there should be the slightest difficulty in obtaining the necessary aid. Upon my explaining this proposed course to Mr. Bokenham, he expressed his desire to have it carried out. I learned from him, however, much to my chagrin, that he received a verbal order to compel attendance; but upon my stating to him the Postmaster-General's promise to the contrary, he said he should apply for further instructions before taking any steps. I wrote a minute in accordance with all this understanding, stating, however, my unabated confidence in my plan of sorting, and my readiness to undertake the responsibility of its execution if the Postmaster-General should so decide. Having shown this to Mr. Tilley, who had been present throughout the conversation, and who at once vouched for the accuracy of the statements contained therein, I went straight to Brighton, obtained without difficulty the requisite powers for Mr. Bokenham, and, in short, the Postmaster-General's approval of the whole minute, he "viewing it as a very satisfactory mode of reconciling the voluntary principle with a peremptory order to Bokenham, and expressing himself much indebted to me for the trouble I had taken."

All now seemed to be satisfactorily arranged for action; but three days later new doubts arose, the Postmaster-General informing me that Mr. Bokenham had withdrawn from his engagement to me, and that he himself had thought it necessary to issue a positive order, upon which he had no doubt the new duty would be executed, and, as he confidently hoped, by volunteers. After mentioning that he had overlooked the phrase in my minute relative to volunteers from without, he advised that, supposing Mr. Bokenham should express no distrust of his power, I should now

leave the matter in his hands. I could not but feel anxious lest his lordship's authorization to Mr. Bokenham should include that compulsion which I so strongly deprecated; and upon finding, when I got sight of the instructions referred to in his letter, that I was not mistaken, I at once replied (see Appendix E.), informing him how I had become pledged to the opposite course, declaring myself still ready to undertake the responsibility of the sorting by volunteers, provided I received the powers which had been conferred on Mr. Bokenham, and repeating my earnest desire that the improvement should be abandoned altogether rather than we should "run the risk of compelling any one to do that to which he has a conscientious objection."

My anxiety on the subject was not without reason:—

'*October* 19*th*.—The "Morning Herald" has a leader, letter, and advertisement, stating that the voluntary plan has been withdrawn (hitherto this paper has repeatedly denied that the work was to be voluntary), and that compulsion will be resorted to. The leader, of course, attributes all this to me.

'The Postmaster-General came to town. He again hesitates; will immediately consult Lord John Russell. I pressed for an immediate decision. * * * The Postmaster-General intimates that when the excitement is over there must be a searching inquiry, and a change in the organization of the office favourable to my interests; but expectations of the kind have been so frequently raised only to be disappointed that such intimations produce little effect on my mind.'

Lord John Russell, in the main, confirmed my view as to the employment of volunteers exclusively. The Postmaster-General informed me that he had spoken seriously to Mr. Bokenham, and hoped for good results. I pointed out to the Postmaster-General that though his order for the execution of the plan was peremptory, yet, considering the ample field given

for obtaining volunteers, it could not possibly enjoin compulsion; with which conclusion he agreed.

Meantime the work of agitation did not relax:—

'*October* 22*nd.*—Inflammatory appeals to the public, representing us as resorting to compulsion, are placarded, among other places, on the boards for official notices at some of the churches.'

Still, whatever the present pain, I was confident of eventual results, provided there was no flinching; but it was of the first importance to have a complete and definite understanding as to the mode of action. Vacillation must be brought to an end, if possible, and, fortunately, it was decided the next day that I should undertake the duty, with authority to raise volunteers in and out of the office.

I consequently began at once to make needful arrangements, when Mr. Bokenham, informing me that for certain reasons it would be easier for him to obtain volunteers than he had supposed, expressed a desire to try again, and the next day he undertook in writing to discharge the duty by the aid of volunteers alone; and this offer, with a minute of my own, I despatched to the Postmaster-General, again at Brighton, who wrote me word next day that he had approved my minute "with great satisfaction."

'*October* 25*th.*—Called with Matthew on the Hon. [and Rev.] Grantham Yorke, Rector of St. Philip's, Birmingham, who is come to town partly to learn the real facts of the Sunday duties question (he called yesterday at the Post Office, but I was unable to see him). He takes a very liberal view of the question, and will defend the measure at a town's meeting, to be held next Tuesday, in Birmingham.'

This promise Mr. Yorke handsomely fulfilled, and not without good effect, though public feeling was still too strong to allow of immediate success.

On the same day that I saw Mr. Yorke there were

more inflammatory notices at the churches; but to these no printer's name was attached.

It was no wonder that symptoms of direct insubordination began to appear in the department; the gas in Mr. Bokenham's office being on one occasion suddenly put out, and one of the volunteers for the Sunday duty hooted. I could not but feel great anxiety as to the issue, since an open outbreak would have thrown all into confusion; nor can I deem it even now quite superfluous to point out that when any considerable portion of the public, acting upon an *ex-parte* statement, and hastily assuming that that which is not promptly denied must needs be true, takes upon itself to countenance discontent in an important Government department, it may thereby expose the whole country to the risk of most serious inconvenience, and must, at least, produce in the department itself great anxiety and the waste of much valuable time.

Some months afterwards the Postmaster-General admitted that he was now satisfied that we should have had a strike in the Inland Office if the men had had the slightest pretext for it; and that if he had forced any one to attend on Sundays, which he says —— pressed him to do, it would, no doubt, have furnished the pretext.

On the following day I became aware of one source of misconception among the men, and, through them, communicating itself to the public: Mr. Bokenham admitting that, when he communicated to his clerks the Postmaster-General's positive order for the Sunday transmission, he withheld the minute limiting the service to volunteers, thus raising, and in some degree justifying, the cry that compulsion would be employed.

Meanwhile the trouble thus excited in St. Martin's-le-Grand was extending to the provincial offices, at

one of which the postmaster had gone so far as to issue, under his own signature, a hand-bill against the measure. Meanwhile one postmaster, at least, took a very different course :—

'The postmaster at Plymouth has written to say that in his office alone thirty men including letter-carriers, will be relieved. He describes the measure as one of the most important "in the annals of the Post Office."'

All such support was very important at a time when opposition was so strong, and, I must add, so unscrupulous :—

'*October 27th.*—The Committee of the Lord's Day Society has issued a copy of my minute of February 3rd, with comments thereon of a very offensive character. They insinuate doubts as to the minute having been written in February, and express their belief that I originally proposed a Sunday delivery.

'*Same day.*—Worse placards than ever at the churches. Sent in a memorandum to Colonel Maberly informing him that at a church in Gresham Street a placard is exhibited exhorting the men to strike.'

The following is the text of this strange exhortation :—

'TO THE CLERKS, SORTERS, CARRIERS, AND OTHER AGENTS OF THE POST OFFICE.

'FELLOW MEN! especially to ye "who fear God and work righteousness,"—

'You ought, you must obey God rather than man!
This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.
Trust in the Lord, and do good, and verily ye shall be fed.

'Strike!—Every one of ye to a man. Strike!—Make a passive resistance to the adversaries of your souls. Strike! and let Mr. Rowland Hill, and Lords Clanricarde and John Russell, see that there is One mightier than they whose commands you reverence supremely.

'Unite if you can, but let no man defer to the timid or compromising spirit of a fellow-servant.

'Honour and observe the Word of God.

'Unless *you* stand, the public cannot at this juncture do much more than they have done.

'Stand ye, and *then* the entire nation, every one in it whose voice is habitually raised up to the King of kings, will hold you up, and *in due time* will strive for the freedom of every postal servant throughout the kingdom on the Sabbath-day; but *you* must be bold in the name of the Lord, in order to engage His mighty favour and the sympathy of His people universally.

'What an impudent daring is this by creatures of mere circumstance and pomp!

'God is defied, and the genuine execrating outcry of a Christian nation is set at naught!

'It is to be hoped that our Queen will be solicited to cast such men out from her councils and executive; *they* are the men who endanger the State; for, most assuredly as there is a God who taketh vengeance, so will this realm be visited if the sins of it should be so enormously added unto; and the Lord's people (who are the saving salt of it) will be constrained to say, "Even so, Lord, so let Thine enemies perish."

'Fellow Christians of every denomination! continue to pray for the oppressed, they shall have a holy fortitude themselves to cast from them the bands of the oppressor.

'6, Finsbury Pavement,
'*Friday*, 26*th October*, 1849.'

As usual, in these exhortations to bold defiance, the printer's name was cautiously suppressed.

While so much was doing to abuse the public mind, official reserve prevented my taking the most direct means for its correction:—

'*Same day.*—The Postmaster-General objects to my sending the proposed information to the newspapers; he thinks it will be better to wait and see what they say, contradicting it if necessary. I cannot convince him of the practical impossibility of correcting an erroneous impression when once adopted by the public.'

After all that has been described, the reader will

not be surprised at the next passage from my journal. I must premise, however, that ere this the time for hesitation was past, the labour of first preparation concluded, and the day of actual trial come :—

'*October 28th. Sunday.*—Very ill—confined to my bed nearly the whole day. I have no doubt my illness has been caused by the anxieties of the last month.'

Of course, however, I was eagerly desirous of information as to the success of the first experiment, particularly as to whether the force engaged had proved, as I expected, ample. I had ascertained the previous day "that no more carriages, drivers, guards, &c., would be employed in conveying the bags from and to the stations than heretofore on a Sunday; the only difference will be that four-wheeled carriages with two horses will be substituted for two-wheeled carriages with one horse." Mr. Bokenham wrote up from the office that the work not having been quite completed by ten o'clock, though twenty minutes more would have sufficed, he had requested ten of the force to return in the evening to finish; a necessity arising, however, from the fact that the number of letters was 18,000 or 20,000 more than usual on the Sunday. He added, that "the men were all in excellent humour, and exerted themselves to their utmost."

On the following day, when, though better, I was unable to leave home, I looked with anxiety into the morning papers to learn what would be the complexion of their reports in the absence of that information which I had been forbidden to supply; and, with concern, I found my unsatisfactory anticipations confirmed. Even the 'Times,' which had hitherto given us so much support, headed its article with "*Commencement* of Sunday labour in the Post Office;" made it appear that it was intended

to make a despatch by the day-mails, but that the attempt failed; represented the attendance as compulsory, and stated that not less than fifty men were employed in the additional duties, the actual number being only twenty-five. Handbills, too, were publicly distributed by letter-carriers, attacking not only me, but also the Postmaster-General, and even the Government.

Amidst so many difficulties on one side it was natural that those on the other should be overlooked. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had written to me saying that he did not see the necessary connection between Sunday relief in the provinces and the Sunday transmission of letters through London; intimating, in fine, that we might retain the one and abandon the other. In reply, I informed him that I could not have ventured to propose the one change without the other, reminded him that there were two parties to be considered in the matter, referred for further explanation to my minute of the previous February, repeated my conviction that by the use of proper means the additional force at the Chief Office could be altogether dispensed with, reported satisfactory results thus far, and forwarded, as evidence of relief at the provincial offices, the letter lately received from the postmaster of Plymouth.

On the day after writing this letter, being still confined to the house, I received a note from the Postmaster-General, informing me that he was much pressed to issue an order for compelling attendance, and that he wished me to consider the question before he next came to the office. On going myself to the office on the following day, I learnt that a larger Sunday force had been applied for by Mr. Bokenham, partly with a view to completing the work in the morning, and partly to enable him to work the men on alternate Sundays only. He

wished the number to be raised to forty, which, by alternation, would be in effect five less than the number I had proposed; yet I hesitated to agree to the change, knowing how the matter would be misrepresented abroad.

'*November 2nd.*—In the evening the Postmaster-General came to the office, and reported that Lord John Russell concurred in the importance of avoiding compulsion. The final settlement is deferred till Monday.'

Even the authority of the Premier, however, did not remove all difficulties, for on my suggesting to Mr. Bokenham that he should offer a new inducement to volunteers, he again urged that, instead of this, I should consent to a compulsory attendance in rotation; and, upon my refusal, asked permission to warn men that unless there were sufficient volunteers compulsion would be resorted to; offering, as I still refused, to do this in his own name, without implicating me. Of course I stood firm to my point.

When the second Sunday had passed much as the first, I again offered, with a view to avoid further importunity, to undertake the work myself; but scarcely had I done this when a new difficulty arose, for which, however, I was not altogether unprepared. An eminent printer, who had offered me the aid of fifty of his men, deemed it prudent to withdraw, as he saw reason to believe that persistence would lose him some important custom. At the same time I was warned by anonymous letters of treacherous conduct within the office, and upon my reporting this to the Postmaster-General, learnt that he had received the same warning in letters not anonymous. I had come to him, however, prepared with a memorandum showing the results for which I was ready to make myself responsible, and also the conditions which I deemed essential to success; and,

of course, I stood quite prepared to go on. My offer was the more opportune as Mr. Bokenham, who arrived in the midst of our conversation, informed the Postmaster-General, when I had withdrawn, that he could not remain responsible for the new work, even on the Sunday next ensuing. My offer, therefore, was, with some modification, accepted; and I felt more confident in the charge, because I had devised a means of reducing the number of bags, the chief difficulty on the previous Sunday, from six hundred to one hundred, and because I had learnt from Mr. Tilley that all such volunteers as he had spoken to had renewed their engagement. He himself was ready to go on, and even Mr. Bokenham, though shrinking from the chief responsibility, was, like Mr. Tilley, willing to undertake the share of duty allotted to him according to our first arrangement.* The only remaining doubt was whether the Premier might not decide upon a complete abandonment of the plan.

'*November 6th.*—Saw the Postmaster-General by appointment at his own house in the evening. Lord John Russell, whom he met at the Cabinet Council at Windsor, did not hesitate a moment. The agreement of yesterday was therefore confirmed.'

This was, however, with one modification, viz., that if the office did not supply the requisite number of volunteers, the deficiency should be made up from other Government departments. Happily no such necessity arose, the number of volunteers from the office itself, presenting themselves on the conditions I had been authorized to offer, being more than necessary. Seeing this, Mr. Bokenham for the third time undertook the duty, at first only for the next Sunday, but within two days for permanence. Ac-

* See p. 80.

cordingly the next Sunday, though the additional force still did not exceed twenty-five men, the number of letters, however, being somewhat less than the week before, the whole work was completed in the morning, so as to release all engaged in it by ten o'clock for the whole day. In fine, the difficulty had so completely passed away that three days afterwards Mr. Bokenham came to inquire if I should be likely to make any change in duties during the next three Sundays, as he wished to leave town; and upon my doubting the safety of his withdrawal at such a time, gave it as his opinion that there was no danger.

Among the circumstances tending to this satisfactory result was, doubtless, an authority which I had obtained from the Postmaster-General to form a permanent corps of volunteers, principally from other Government offices, who were to receive a month's pay, whether called upon for actual service or not. The Stamp and Record Offices alone were ready to supply thirty-five men, or ten more than needful.

I could not, however, fully share in Mr. Bokenham's confidence. Only four days before, inflammatory handbills had been distributed within the office, one being deposited at each sorter's place, while a subsorter was selling, at a halfpenny per copy, an abusive song attacking myself; proceedings which, as the Postmaster-General remarked in calling for investigation, showed that there must be great neglect in the discipline of the office.

There continued, likewise, a daily issue of placards, which were exhibited chiefly on the churches and in certain shop-windows, one of these latter being nearly opposite my room. A few of these placards were avowedly issued by the Lord's Day Society, but most of them were anonymous. All had the appearance of being concocted more or less in the

Post Office, and all evinced an utter disregard of truth. I retain to this day a collection of these mendacious papers, which, though large, is nevertheless incomplete. The strike among the men urged in some of them never went further than the refusal, on the part of the guards, on one occasion, to assist in placing the bags in the carriages at the Post Office; in consequence of which, even before I knew the fact, they were all suspended from employment by the Postmaster-General.

However, as the Sunday duty was now permanently off my hands, I had leisure to direct my attention towards those measures for diminishing its amount which formed an integral part of my plan. One of these was so to arrange the work as to have the greatest practicable amount of sorting done in the travelling offices; the earlier portion terminating by five on Sunday morning, and the latter not commencing till nine on Sunday evening. The pursuit of this object led to a singular device. One portion of the correspondence passing through London on the Sunday seemed incapable of being brought within this arrangement, viz., that from towns too near to London to allow of time for sorting on the way; but while I was preparing a minute on the subject, in which my brother Arthur was assisting me, I suddenly startled him, so he now reports, by exclaiming: "A light breaks in upon me." I had just conceived the first notion of the device referred to above, which, paradoxical as it may seem, really answers its purpose very well. This was that the *down* mail-trains on Saturday night should take up these letters at the different towns on their respective routes, thus conveying them, in the first instance, in a direction opposite to their eventual destination, but subsequently transfering them to the up-trains for conveyance to town. By this arrangement the required

opportunity for sorting the letters was obtained; and, indirect as is the route, no time whatever is lost to the public, which to this day, I believe, remains quite unaware of the anomaly. Another point for relief was a Sunday morning delivery in the suburbs of London, employing about four hundred men, against which, amidst all the hubbub of the time, not a word had been said; and it occurred to me that, as a means of immediately reducing the work, the district cross posts might be dispensed with on Sundays, which could be done without inconvenience.

The Postmaster-General was delighted with an arrangement reducing Sunday work in the London district, and at once agreed to putting down the cross posts, a change which released eleven men. He was inclined, indeed, as a punishment to the agitators, to abolish the Sunday morning delivery without any substitution; but, upon my advice, this project was abandoned.

Accordingly, after consulting Mr. Smith, the head of the District Office, and suggesting to him the substitution of a late Saturday night delivery in the nearer suburbs for that on Sunday morning, a plan of relief which I had proposed, as a more general measure, when at the Treasury;* and after obtaining from him and his surveyor a report showing that by the adoption of this plan more than a hundred men might be forthwith released from Sunday duty in the metropolitan district alone, so as to give even there a large balance in favour of relief, while further investigation, to be immediately entered upon, promised additional benefit, I was able, within a fortnight, to submit a minute recommending the measure in detail; and to this the Postmaster-General gave his sanction, though he sadly wished to carry the change to its penal extent.

* See Report of Select Committee on Postage, 1843, p. 35.

Further measures of relief soon followed :—

'*November* 30*th.*—At home finishing a minute on the sorting of Sunday letters. I have again improved the plan, so as to have most of the sorting done in the country on Saturday night and Sunday morning [of course very early, viz., before the passing of the up mails]. Four or five men working in London on the Sunday will, I expect, suffice.'

'*December* 1*st.*—Smith tells me that he shall be able to include every place in the six mile circle in the measure of Sunday relief. Nearly two hundred persons will thus be released from Sunday duty in the metropolitan district.'

On the same day, I wrote a minute pointing out the means for reducing the number of bags, as already spoken of, and learning from Mr. Tilley that some reports on this subject were lying in the office, I sent for them, and found that they were in reply to a minute of the Postmaster-General, written nearly two months before on information given by me; that the reports represented my plan as quite practicable, and as saving "nearly half the labour of making-up and despatching the bags;" but that orders had been given that no change should be made; and that the reports had not even been submitted to the Postmaster-General. Of course I went forward with the improvement, which was carried into effect about six weeks later.

Meantime, there had appeared, from very different quarters, and on very different grounds, two able defences of our late proceedings: one from the late General Peyronnet Thompson, in the form of a series of letters to the 'Sun' newspaper, and the other from the Rev. Dr. Vaughan, Head Master of Harrow. General Thompson, for the most part, subordinated the question of the day to one of a more general character, viz., the obligation on Christians to observe the Mosaic law; but Dr. Vaughan perceived that, as the former question did not involve

the latter, it was better to discuss it separately. His paper is remarkably forcible and terse. Such support from so high a quarter at so critical a time was invaluable. I quote his concluding passage :—

'Let these evils [those of Sunday labour] be met on their proper ground, and at the proper time. Let the good sense and the religious feeling of the country be appealed to when the danger really threatens. At present it is as remote as ever. It will not be brought one step nearer by *this* measure. But it *may* be increased by a premature and unreasonable outcry, to be succeeded, as usual, by a very natural recoil.'

To accelerate the process of Sunday relief, I thought it would be well to assemble all the surveyors for England and Wales, and to discuss with them, *vivâ voce*, questions usually dealt with by tedious correspondence. The meeting took place in December, the business occupying several successive days, and the results being highly satisfactory, the more so as all their recommendations were made unanimously. In short, the opportunity thus afforded for receiving information, obtaining opinions, and explaining my own views and intentions, proved so beneficial to the service, that in important cases I resorted again and again to similar convention, and always found the course both profitable and pleasant, increasing the interest of the surveyors in the work of improvement, and, by the collision of many opinions, breaking down prejudices and overthrowing obstacles. I may say, once for all, as regards the effect on myself, that though these discussions led to no change in principles, they often modified actual measures.

I cannot conclude this brief account of the meeting without mentioning a singular fact which I learnt in the course of it—a fact from which much more might be inferred. Amongst the circuitous courses long maintained for carrying mails forward on the Sunday, without using the forbidden route through London,

it appeared that letters posted at Kingston-on-Thames on the Saturday night for Barnet were conveyed by way of Exeter; thus travelling more than four hundred miles instead of five-and-twenty!

Meanwhile, I thought the time had arrived for effecting an additional Sunday relief contemplated from the first. Under the old arrangement there had always been performed on the Sunday certain work which properly belonged to the Monday; the reason for this anomalous proceeding being that the amount of duty accumulated on the Monday by the Sunday suspension of business was, without such relief, more than could be dealt with. The relief, however, arising from the Sunday transit of letters had made it indisputably practicable for Monday to execute all its own work. This rectification, indeed, I had advised in the very outset, feeling confident of its feasibility; but I had been met not only with the usual declaration that the thing was impracticable, but with objections so plausible that, for once, I abated self-confidence, and supposed that the practical officers must be right. To my great surprise, on now moving in the matter, I found that, to a considerable extent, the impracticable change had already been effected, though, unluckily, no corresponding reduction had been made in the Sunday force. Such reduction I began, therefore, to urge; and before the close of the year Mr. Bokenham had reluctantly consented to reduce his Sunday force by eleven men, giving, at the same time, promise of further reduction on the following Sunday, if practicable; a question soon settled, the Postmaster-General sanctioning, on the second day of the next year (January 2, 1850), minutes reducing the Sunday force in the London Office from twenty-six men, the number ordinarily employed for many years, to three; ten or eleven, however, being employed either before five o'clock in

the morning or after eight o'clock at night in the mail carriages.

When, earlier in these proceedings, I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, telling him that I thought an additional expenditure of 500*l.* a year would enable me to adopt measures indicated in my minute of the previous February for bringing the Sunday force within its original limits, his answer was that, if necessary, I might take 1500*l.*

'*December* 28*th.*—Another minute has been sanctioned, subject to the approval of the Treasury, which will abolish certain day-mails, cross-posts, and double despatches, now rendered useless by the discontinuance of the second delivery on the Sunday at provincial offices. In addition to this the receipt of inland letters will be confined to the stamped and unpaid, and, as a general result, the offices throughout England and Wales will close from 10 A.M. for the rest of the day, instead of opening again at 5 P.M. as they now do. * * * By these means additional rest, averaging from three to five hours, will be given at the provincial post offices.'

My recommendation for transferring the Sunday morning delivery to Saturday night was also carried into effect this day, and I may add that that which was thus found practicable on Saturday night was at length acknowledged to be so on all other nights; and thus was established that late suburban delivery which is still maintained, much to the convenience of the public.

So ended the year 1849, amidst clouds which, though still dark enough to remind me of the storm that had been raging for the last three months, and to warn me that more disturbance might yet come, were at least beginning to break.

I have already referred to hostility in the office as the chief source of the great trouble which had befallen the department in general, and me in par-

ticular. But for a mutinous spirit amongst the men, attacks from without, however annoying, could not have produced that grievous anxiety which arose from the knowledge of treason within. This, I may remark, was the third distinct cabal formed with a view to drive me from office; and like its predecessors, and one more yet to be mentioned, was so timed as to take advantage of a temporary weakness in my position; a weakness caused on this occasion by my having ventured, in quest of a great good, to encounter popular feeling.

I cannot conclude this portion of my narrative without remarking how near the great measure of Sunday relief was to being defeated by public clamour arising out of the hasty acceptance of mendacious statements from insubordinate officers. At the City meeting in the previous October it had been maintained that the temporary addition of twenty-five men would not only be made permanent, but would soon be swollen to six hundred; and here, within four months of this prediction, not only had the whole addition been dispensed with, but also the original force of twenty-six men had been reduced to fourteen; of whom, moreover, four only worked during the day, while of the remainder, who were employed in the several travelling offices, five ceased work at about five o'clock on Sunday morning, and the remaining five did not commence work until about eight o'clock on Sunday night.

The main results are summed up in a Report which I made to the Postmaster-General on the 28th of January 1850, and which was afterwards printed by order of the House of Commons.* Of this a notice from an impartial quarter will appear later in this narrative.

In the mean time, Dr. Vaughan, of Harrow, had

* Parliamentary Return, 1850, No. 185.

published a second letter in defence of our proceedings; this being written in reply to a violent and unscrupulous attack by a brother clergyman and schoolmaster. This able paper sums up as follows:—

'I have now discharged, however imperfectly, the task imposed upon me by circumstances which I must still deplore. Earnestly, most earnestly, do I desire the thankful and reverent observance of the Lord's Day, with which I believe our national as well as individual welfare to be closely, inseparably linked. Deeply do I lament the condition of those weary and comfortless labourers who are cut off from the inestimable blessings to be derived from its holy rest. It is because I believe that many of the provincial officers of our national Post Office are involved in this calamity, and that the present measure contemplates, and in part effects, their emancipation, that I have condemned the blind hostility with which it has been assailed, and laboured to expose the misrepresentations by which that hostility has been fostered.'*

The complainants had now so far extended their demands as in effect to abandon their former ground, the cry now being for the total abolition of Sunday postal work of all kinds.

The Postmaster-General having called upon the Secretaries to report on this demand, I presented mine, on the 5th of January, and it was printed, with other documents, by order of the House of Commons.† The following is a summary of its contents:—

I first recognise the great relief that would be given to the department by such total suspension, and then proceed to show why I had not ventured to recommend it. I drew a distinction between collection and delivery on the one hand, and conveyance on the other, pointing out that the former could be suspended in any particular place without mate-

* Second Letter on the late Post Office Agitation, by Charles John Vaughan, D.D., p. 32.

† Par. Pro. 1850, No. 185, p. 46.

rially affecting the convenience of any other place, while the latter could not be so suspended even on a portion of a single line of mail without affecting the convenience of every place which that line served, whether directly or indirectly; so that while the former suspension might be adopted in detail, according to the wish of each particular place, supposing this to be really ascertained, the latter would require a much more general concurrence. I advised that wherever Sunday delivery by letter-carriers was abolished, the abolition should extend also to delivery at the window, and I suggested that, where delivery was retained, individuals might be allowed to protect themselves against it by giving in a written notice to that effect at the post office.

In respect of conveyance, I thought it possible that if demand became sufficiently general, it might in time become practicable to suspend branch posts serving many places, and that with the concurrence of the public such suspension might gradually be carried to a very great extent; but I saw no hope of such a state of things as would justify the interruption of the mails on the trunk lines, which were indispensable alike to the purposes of Government and the convenience of the public; and on this latter point I showed in considerable detail what an enormous amount of derangement such suspension would produce. I showed that to suspend all operations of the Post Office for the twenty-four hours of Sunday must necessarily involve the interruption of the mails for more than twenty-four hours, and that this would make it impossible for them to start at midnight on Sunday from the point at which they stopped at midnight on Saturday; a derangement which would produce inconvenience at place after place throughout each line, not only altering the hours of delivery, but also dis-

turbing arrangements with the branch mails, cross mails, and rural posts, throughout the greater part of the kingdom, the whole evil being doubled by its necessarily applying to mails in both directions. I showed further, that as the stoppage of the mails would not imply the stoppage of the mail trains, since passengers would never consent to such an interruption, there would be no cessation of traffic, while the relief even to the servants of the Post Office would be but nominal, since it would be found indispensable to an efficient responsibility that the bags when at rest, just as when in motion, should remain under the custody of the guards, who would thus have to continue on duty throughout the day of rest.

With regard to the amount of public inconvenience which would arise from the interruption, I showed that, supposing but one letter in a thousand to contain tidings of pressing importance, there would be, at the then existing rate of correspondence, nearly a thousand cases per week in which delay would painfully interfere with the feelings of relatives and friends, or lead to serious trouble or loss; and that the necessity so produced would inevitably lead to a revival of contraband conveyance, detrimental alike to Sunday observance and the interests of the office.

In conclusion, I pointed out that by the measures then in progress, combined with others carried into effect during the previous year, improvements were now in such a state of advancement that in a few days the Sunday duty throughout England and Wales would be reduced to probably little more than half its original amount; this great benefit having been obtained in such a manner as not only not to impair, but greatly to promote the public convenience.

'*January* 21*st*.—The Postmaster-General is highly pleased

at my Report on the proposed total abolition of Sunday duties, which is to be sent to Lord John Russell for use in debate. I have advised that its statements, which necessarily run into considerable detail, should be checked by the practical men.'

So far as I remember, however, no error was discovered.

Soon after this symptoms of a better understanding on the part of the public began to appear, more defenders arising in various quarters, and even those who made extreme demands taking a more gentle tone.

But whatever assurance I might now have as to improved feeling in the public, an ordeal which I was about to go through still seemed formidable.

I had had the pain to learn that Mr. Wallace, who had done so much for the public and for myself, had fallen into pecuniary difficulties, so that his friends in Scotland were raising a subscription for his benefit. A public meeting had been resolved upon, and I was earnestly requested to attend, which I promised to do, though with considerable misgiving as to the sort of reception I was likely to meet with. My doubts were nowise removed by a letter received from my uncle, Provost Lea of Haddington, who, having been apprised of my expected visit by the Scotch newspapers, wrote in the most earnest terms to deprecate the attempt, warning me that the feeling against me northward of the Tweed was so strong that he feared I should be literally torn to pieces by the mob; and though, of course, I made great allowance for the apprehensions of an affectionate relative and kind-hearted old man, I certainly thought it very likely that hisses and groans might be more abundant than applause. Be this as it might, the journey, being a matter of duty, had to be taken, and on March 6th I went to Glasgow.

The next morning, before proceeding to Greenock, I paid a visit to the large ship-yard of Messrs. Napier, employing several hundred men; and after having been politely conducted through that interesting establishment, I was about to leave, when the foreman of a gang of workmen busily employed in constructing a large iron vessel came forward and demanded in a loud voice, "Three cheers for Rowland Hill;" a call responded to by what seemed to my gratified ears a unanimous shout. Thus encouraged, I went to Greenock. The meeting was held in a large church, the chairman occupying the pulpit; a usual arrangement, as I was assured, in Scotland. On rising to speak I was received, so said the newspapers, "with enthusiastic applause;" the same being repeated when I sat down.* Of what I said I will merely remark that justice, gratitude, and sympathy for my suffering friend, combined to draw from me my best efforts, and I may add that Mr. Wallace and his friends were profuse in their thanks. At the close of the proceedings I was hospitably entertained by a gentleman of the town, who had invited a large party to meet me, and on the following day, after inspecting the post office both at Greenock and Glasgow, I set out on my return, very agreeably disappointed in the expectations with which I had gone forth. I must not close this account without mentioning that the result of the subscription was the purchase of an annuity of 500*l.* for Mr. Wallace's life.

After taking a few hours' holiday at the Falls of the Clyde, I set out on my return, and concluded my journey in high spirits; finding, however, on my return, as indeed I might have expected, an enormous accumulation of papers.

On the 19th of the month the question of the

* For this speech, which, in justice to Mr. Wallace, I give at length, see Vol. i., Appendix B.

total abolition of Sunday duty was shortly discussed in the House of Lords; Lords Malmesbury, Clanricarde, and Brougham speaking against the measure, while the Bishop of Oxford and Lord Harrowby spoke cautiously in its favour. On the same day my friend Mr. Matthew Forster, at my request, moved in the Commons for the several reports on the question of Sunday duty; a motion at once acceded to by the Government.

I cannot mention Mr. Forster without adding that the friendliness which he had shown me from my first acquaintance with him continued with steady increase to the end of his life; that, in short, I stand indebted to him and to his family for much kindness and much valuable aid.

Two days later, the Postmaster-General having offered to a deputation from Edinburgh a Parliamentary Committee on the subject, this proposal (at the recommendation of the Secretary to the Lord's Day Society) was declined; a conclusive proof of conscious weakness.

'*April* 10*th.*—This morning's "Herald" contains an account of a meeting at Exeter Hall to petition for total abolition. Few men of weight appear to have been present, and the whole proceedings were in a subdued tone. One of the speakers in describing what I have done spoke of it as a step in the right direction. Their resolutions, of course, contain various misrepresentations.'

It was evident that the agitation was rapidly subsiding, and two days later I was able to administer an additional sedative; my report of January 28th, showing the progress made in Sunday relief, being at length printed, I sent out five hundred copies in various directions, feeling sure that the statements therein contained, however unavailing to such as resolutely kept their eyes shut, would have no small effect upon the more candid.

A week later I record progress:—

'*April 20th.*—The returns are producing their effect. I have received numerous letters congratulating me on the result.'

I also began to conjecture as to the probability of formal retractation by those, so many in number, who had assailed and misrepresented our measures in tirades, whether from the press, pulpit, at public meetings, or otherwise. My recorded summary is, "I don't expect it." Up to that time, so far as I am aware, there had been but two proceedings of this kind. Lord Ashley, in a private letter to the Postmaster-General, had declared that the country was under the greatest obligations to him for the Sunday relief already afforded; and of the attacking journals one had frankly acknowledged its error; and though, doubtless, many instances of such reparation may have occurred unknown to me, it is remarkable that neither record nor memory supplies me with a third instance either then or afterwards. The one paper thus honourably distinguished is the 'Leeds Mercury,' which had been throughout a stanch supporter of postal reform, but had too hastily yielded credence to bold and plausible allegations. The 'Times,' which, though sometimes erring in matters of detail, had, on the whole, given able and highly valuable support during the late trial, published on April 25th the following admirable exposition and defence of the whole proceeding:—

'Historians and essayists delight in flattering the self-opinion of their contemporaries by extraordinary anecdotes of popular delusion in less enlightened times. A kind of indefinite satisfaction appears to be derived from contrasting the inferiority of previous generations. The confidence with which for many years together 5,000,000 English Protestants believed themselves in bodily peril from 100,000 Catholics is a favourite instance of the kind. The "loss of our eleven days" is another; when, upon a simple correction of the calendar, grave divines actually lectured from the pulpit on the blas-

phemous wickedness of interfering with the course of time, and denounced the profanity which brought every sinner in the kingdom nearly a fortnight closer to his end. Mr. Macaulay, too, informs us that the post when first established was the object of violent invective, as a manifest contrivance of the Pope to enslave the souls of Englishmen; and most books of history or anecdote will supply stories equally notable. But we really very much doubt whether any tale of ancient times can match the exhibition of credulity which occurred in our own country, and under our own eyes, within these last twelve months.

'We need not enter upon any narrative. Every reader's recollection will carry him back to last Christmas, when, from one end of the kingdom to the other, there was a loud and steady outcry against a projected "desecration of the Sabbath." Mr. Rowland Hill was introducing "Sunday labour" into this decorous and religious country. He had succeeded in inserting "the small end of the wedge." He had asked for twenty-five additional clerks on Sunday, and a few months would see this pressed labour indefinitely multiplied, and all ideas of Sabbath observance contemptuously forsworn. Such was the belief even amongst intelligent people. Meetings were held in all great towns to record a protest against the iniquity; and, when the resistance proved unsuccessful, it was plainly asserted that the national character was for ever gone. As for the promoter of the measure, he was a forsaken reprobate, who looked only to the acceleration of day-mails, without the smallest heed to the fourth commandment. We have before us at this moment a sheet of letter-paper, headed by an engraving of "Rowland Hill's new Chapel, St. Martin's-le-Grand," under which title is depicted the General Post Office on a Sunday morning, with all the symbols of unholy industry and bustle. However, the measure in question was carried out, and we will now—from the official returns on the subject—inform the reader in plain unadorned language how it originated, what it contemplated, and what it has actually brought to pass.

'More than two years ago the attention of the Post Office authorities was directed towards the means of *abridging Sunday labour* in the various offices, and inquiries were instituted with this object. While they were in progress, Mr. Hill succeeded to the secretaryship of a certain department, which brought

the subject under his immediate care, and he promoted with all his efforts the advancement of the great end in view. Opinions were not altogether concurrent on the matter, but a step was at length taken, and on Sunday, the 6th of February, 1848, the post office at Bath was closed for money-order business on that day. The experiment succeeded, and on the 13th of August in the same year the regulation was extended to Leeds, and, six weeks later, to Birmingham—still without inconvenience or complaint. Fortified by these results, the authorities conceived themselves competent to push still further their great object of *abridging Sunday labour*, and the arrangements above mentioned were, at the commencement of last year, extended to all offices in England and Wales, so that four hundred and fifty offices were *relieved of a material portion of their Sunday duties* in a single day. Three months more saw the same indulgence conceded to Ireland and Scotland, by which two hundred and thirty-four additional offices experienced the same relief.

'Pending these trials and successes, Mr. Rowland Hill conceived a plan for *abridging Sunday labour* still more considerably, and, indeed, to a great extent, abolishing it altogether. The duties hitherto suspended had been those of the Money Order Department alone; but a scheme was now entertained of greatly limiting Sunday deliveries, and of absolutely closing the offices between the hours of ten and five; or, in other words, from the commencement of the morning service in churches till the close of the afternoon. With this proposed limitation of deliveries was combined a regulation, long known to be desirable, for the transmission of a certain class of letters *through London* on a Sunday, which would, it was thought, by giving very considerable accommodation at a small cost of labour, tend to reconcile the public to the cessation of those Sunday deliveries which were now to be stopped. It was this proposal which caused the outcry. Mr. Hill asked but for the temporary service of twenty-five clerks as a present means of relieving twenty times that number; and he showed his reasons for anticipating that no measure could ultimately be more effective in *abridging Sunday labour* altogether than that now proposed. All this was in vain. He was, as our readers know, decried, denounced, and stigmatized as a Sabbath-breaker and apostate; although his very proposition was actually one of a well-

considered series for diminishing Sunday labour throughout the kingdom.

'Now, let the results be marked, for certainly never was popular delusion more conspicuously displayed. To begin with the particular incident complained of:—Mr. Hill had always stated that the necessity for the extra labour would be brief, whereas his assailants declared that the expedient would inevitably tend to nationalise Sabbath-breaking and demoralize the whole State. On Sunday, the 28th of October, the additional force of twenty-five men was first employed; on the 6th of January following it was reduced to thirteen; on the 13th of the same month to three; and on the very next Sunday it was dispensed with altogether, having effected its objects within the space of three months. So much for the "evil" done. Now let us see what good was brought by it.

'By the device and execution of these measures five hundred and seventy-six provincial post offices have experienced a total positive relief of about seven and a quarter hours each Sunday, and upwards of four thousand dependent offices have received a similar relief of about seven hours. Estimated in relation to individuals, the effect of the measures *has been to give to five thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine persons an average Sunday relief of five and three quarter hours each;* that is to say, nearly six thousand people have been relieved from nearly six hours' work every Sunday by the operation of a scheme which was denounced as a deliberate encouragement to Sabbath-breaking and profanity. Nor have the results ended here, for, as if to complete the exposure, the new arrangements have actually led to a discontinuance even of that existing labour which they were described as augmenting in perpetuity. The Sunday force regularly employed in the Post Office *before* the famous provisions of Mr. Rowland Hill's scheme amounted to twenty-seven men. On the first day of operations under the new system this, to the scandal and horror of the public, was increased to fifty-two. To be sure some four thousand or five thousand were relieved in other quarters by the same regulation; but this little compensation was altogether overlooked in the great iniquity. But what followed? Not only was this additional force dispensed with *in toto* before three months had passed, but its labours had even contributed to lighten the lot of those who still remained. So well did the new arrangements act, that

the work of the *original* force began gradually and steadily to diminish, and we are now officially told that "the whole Sunday force ordinarily employed in the London office will be reduced to five or six men, which, even with the addition of the ten clerks employed in the mail trains (and their duties will intrench but little on the observances of the Sunday), *will make a total force of little more than half that employed before the 28th of October last.*" So that the very expedient which, notwithstanding its beneficial effects elsewhere, was obstinately condemned on the simple ground of its augmenting Sunday labour in a particular office, has actually resulted, not only in completely effecting all its proposed ends, but in diminishing by nearly one-half the identical labour which it appeared for a moment to augment.

'We think the reader will admit that, upon the whole, the outcry by which such a measure as this was represented as a profane and godless scheme for abolishing the observance of the Sabbath, has no equal in history for prodigious and incredible absurdity. Even vaccination, we believe, was never described as a device for actually perpetuating small-pox, whereas the most judicious and effective step in a series of measures expressly designed to abridge Sunday labour has been thus, in the middle of the nineteenth century, represented, taken, and accepted as a deliberate stratagem for destroying the holiness of the Sabbath-day. That the spirit which facilitated the delusion was, in itself, honourable to the country, we freely admit, but that the common sense of Englishmen should be so strangely misled is a fact not very creditable to the national intelligence, or satisfactory to the national pride.'

Good effects also were soon manifest in another quarter of great importance :—

'*April 30th.*—Last-night Mr. Hayter, in reply to a question from Mr. Fagan as to when the Sunday arrangements would be extended to Ireland, spoke of them as having given universal satisfaction; an expression which appears to have been well received in the House.'

In one quarter alone the former wrong was steadily persisted in :—

'*May 9th.*—The Lord's Day Society has issued a manifesto in reply to our reports and minutes. It is more offensive and unprincipled than even their former publications.'

Meantime, as it was necessary, according to long-established practice, to allow some latitude in respect of the force to be summoned on the arrival of an extraordinary mail, I experienced no little difficulty in keeping this liberty within reasonable limits. Thus, though I found that one man was sufficient for dealing with four thousand ship letters, five men had been called in (on Sunday, May 12th) to deal with seventeen hundred. I was consequently obliged to require from Mr. Bokenham a report advising a definite rule for preventing such excess; and this being obtained, matters thenceforth went on more smoothly. In short, the measures for Sunday relief being in the course of this month extended to Scotland and Ireland, I regarded the arrangement as complete.

This agreeable impression, however, was soon afterwards disturbed by Lord Ashley's giving notice of a motion for an address to Her Majesty, praying for measures to be taken to stop the collection and delivery of letters and the transmission of mails on the "Lord's Day;" in other words, for the total abolition of Sunday duty; and the "Lord's Day Society" issued a circular urging members to support this motion. This circular professed to give a history of the demand for total abolition, and of the relief thus far afforded; but, unhappily, it misrepresented the facts of the case. Indeed, I could not but think that the Society, in its zeal for enforcing upon others a strict observance of the fourth commandment, too often deferred to a more convenient season its own observance of the ninth. Being called upon by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to supply such information as would be needful for meeting Lord Ashley's motion, I drew up a memorandum, which, after mentioning further

measures increasing the number of persons relieved to about eight thousand, concludes as follows:—

'In reference to the question of total abolition of Sunday duty it should be remarked—

'First, that its advocates wholly overlook the interests of the poor. To be obliged to resort, as has been proposed in case of need, to the electric telegraph, or to a shilling postage, would be a severe tax upon the poor man; and,

'Secondly, that the Government, having a monopoly of the delivery of letters, cannot refuse to deliver them except in places where the demand is practically unanimous. Numerous small places (about four hundred probably) have preferred such a request, and it has been complied with. Several, however, finding the non-delivery inconvenient, have requested that the delivery may be resumed; and it has been resumed accordingly.'

While the above was in preparation I received a letter from Lord Ashley, urging me to hold out expectations that Government would make further reductions in the Sunday duty, admitting that we "had already done a great deal," and, oddly enough, inferring therefrom that we could do much more. Not agreeing in this conclusion, I was obliged to decline giving the pledge required.

On the following day, viz., that fixed for the motion, I had my first interview with the Premier, waiting upon him by his desire. After a time the Chancellor of the Exchequer came in; both agreed that the motion must be resisted, but I left them in fear that they were not sufficiently prepared for the encounter; I was desired to be under the gallery of the House of Commons. The following entry in my journal records what occurred:—

May 30th.—'At five o'clock went to the House of Commons with Pearson [my son]. The best account of the debate will be found in to-morrow morning's papers; suffice it to say that, though Lord Ashley had not the manliness to admit and apologize for the misrepresentations of his party, he was careful to

express his obligations to the Government and to the Post Office authorities for having reduced Sunday labour; owing partly to Lord Ashley having omitted the most objectionable part of his motion (the stoppage of the mails), and still more, I fear, to the cowardice of the members, * * * the motion was carried, by ninety-three to sixty-eight.'

'*May* 31*st.*—Called on the Postmaster-General [then recovering from a dangerous illness] to report last night's proceedings. The "Times," which gives the best account of the debate, has also an excellent leader.'

In consequence of this resolution of the House, I was summoned by the Postmaster-General and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who wished to consult me as to the course to be taken. While thinking it better to give way in the main, they seemed inclined to take an exception in favour of "delivery at the window;" but against this exception I strongly protested, our experience in Scotland having shown that it would involve more labour, to say nothing of unseemly crowding, than delivery in the ordinary manner. "I suggested that, as the motion proposes the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the stoppage of the mails, the Commission should also inquire into the stoppage of the deliveries and collections. Nothing was decided, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has to consult Lord John Russell."

'*June* 6*th.*—While at the Treasury, ——— came in. On my laughing at him for his vote on the Sunday question, he admitted that he was ashamed of it, adding that he did not expect to be in a majority. I believe that many of the votes were given under similar expectations.'*

'*June* 7*th.*—Mr. Forster [M.P. for Berwick] called to consult me as to his endeavouring to re-open the Sunday ques-

* Such inconsistency was not confined to Members of Parliament; the incumbent of a certain parish in which Sunday delivery had been suspended in consequence of a memorial, to which his own signature was attached, no sooner felt the inconvenience of the change than he wrote an indignant protest against it; naïvely declaring that he had never thought the petition would be granted.

tion. I advised him to do nothing without previously consulting the Chancellor of the Exchequer.'

'*June 8th.*—Lord John Russell, in reply to Mr. Forster, stated that he would not support any motion for the reversal of the resolution of the House on the subject of Sunday duties.'

I scarcely need say that I heartily concurred in his lordship's decision. If the public really desired, at the sacrifice of its own convenience, to confer so great a boon on the Post Office as that implied by the terms of the resolution, it would have been very ungracious in Government to intercept the concession. If otherwise, it was but just that the responsibility of error should rest on the House of Commons, which had interfered in the matter. Accordingly, when, a few days later, Mr. Forster wrote to ask for assistance with reference to a bill which he proposed to introduce to legalize the conveyance of letters on Sunday by private hand—a measure, of the abstract justice of which no one can doubt—I thought it better to decline taking any part in opposition to the decision of the House. Mr. Forster persevered, but his motion was negatived without a division.

As Her Majesty, following of course the advice of her Ministers, formally announced to the House that its wishes would be complied with, notice was forthwith issued from the Chief Office, totally forbidding delivery, and notifying that, though letters might be deposited in the receiving boxes as usual, they would remain "unsorted and untouched until the Monday." It was added, that postmasters contravening these orders would be "most severely punished."

It is remarkable that whereas the late hubbub had been all raised against the Sunday transmission of letters through London, Lord Ashley's motion *contained no reference whatever to this innovation*; and though in the public notice just mentioned it was

distinctly announced that such transmission would be continued, the announcement produced no revival of the outcry, and the innovation gradually came to be regarded as part of the natural course of proceeding.

It did not fare so well with the innovation adopted at the request of the House of Commons :—

'*June* 21*st*.—Last night there was a further discussion in the House of Commons as to the Sunday duties, on an attempt by Mr. Locke to get a window delivery. It is evident that the reaction has commenced.'

'*June* 22*nd*.—Last night Lord Brougham raised the question as to the legality of stopping the Post Office business on the Sunday; and many of the daily and weekly papers of this morning are loud in their condemnation of the measure.'

Public inconvenience was, of course, to be estimated in some degree by the effect of the late change on the amount of correspondence; the change, it should be observed, first took effect on Sunday, June 23rd. :—

'*June* 25*th*. [*Tuesday*].—The stoppage of business on the Sunday reduced yesterday morning's arrival in London by about 80,000 letters, increasing the mid-day arrival by about 18,000, and this morning's by about 16,000—causing, therefore, a diminution of about 47,000 letters in London alone.'

Mr. Locke's motion, which came on on July 9th, was set aside in favour of an amendment moved by Lord John Russell, and carried by a large majority, praying Her Majesty to cause an inquiry to be made whether the amount of Sunday labour in the Post Office might not be reduced without completely putting an end to the collection and delivery of letters, &c. on Sundays.*

The Commission appointed to give effect to this amendment consisted of the Postmaster-General, Mr. Labouchere (afterwards Lord Taunton), and Mr.

* 'Hansard,' vol. cxii. pp. 1214, 1215.

(afterwards Sir) Cornewall Lewis. Their recommendation, promptly arrived at, but expressed after much deliberation, was, in fact, though not in form, that the office should revert to the arrangements which existed previously to the resolution of the House, carried on the motion of Lord Ashley.* I endeavoured, though in vain, to obtain a more distinct avowal as to the real purport of the advice, feeling convinced that the juster and bolder course was also the more politic; an opinion soon confirmed by the manner in which the Report was received by the public press, all the daily papers agreeing in its true interpretation, and the 'Morning Herald' attacking the Commissioners for the indirectness of their proceeding. A fortnight later, however, viz., on September 1st, the recommendation was carried into effect, and though a modification as regards the rural messengers, which had been recommended by the Commission, was, on the advice of the surveyors, adopted by the Postmaster-General, even this change excited so much public dissatisfaction as to produce its partial abandonment.

Thus the whole question of Sunday duties was finally settled, after having kept the department, and particularly myself, in grievous trouble and anxiety for more than sixteen months; during which period the improvements in the general management of the department—which it was my duty and earnest desire to introduce—were to a great extent necessarily delayed; and, as a further evil, a spirit of insubordination was excited, which, being unfortunately backed both in and out of Parliament, gave much subsequent trouble.

* 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to investigate the question of Sunday labour at the Post Office.' 1850.

CHAPTER V.

PARTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN POSITION.

If I had been painfully sensible of the evils attending my anomalous position even before the commencement of the Sunday observance agitation, the suffering I had gone through during its progress, and my fear of its recurrence in some other form, impelled me, as soon as I began to breathe a little freely, to new efforts for relief; and before the end of 1849 I had again addressed the Postmaster-General, briefly referring to past correspondence, and showing how my fears had been confirmed by recent events; how I had been singled out for attack, even in respect of measures which I had earnestly and successfully opposed; and how entirely it was out of my power, in the present state of the office, to render those extended services which were expected of me at the time of my appointment. In the matter and manner of this proceeding I had the entire concurrence of Mr. Warburton, who also undertook to make direct efforts in its support. Past experience, however, gave me but very moderate hope of success; and this was fortunate, for, three months after the delivery of my letter, I learnt, upon inquiry, that all was in *statu quo*—nothing to be done till some hopeless vacancy should occur.

Here, then, was more disappointment; a continuance of my troubles; the maintenance of a position subjecting me to constant demands, but denying me the

promised means of satisfying them. Much as I owed to certain members of the existing administration, and particularly to my immediate official superior, I have never been able to account satisfactorily for the constant adjournment of my claims. I had returned to office, at much personal sacrifice, under a virtual promise, contingent only on my demonstrating certain powers; and yet, though neither promise nor demonstration was ever denied or even questioned, fulfilment was withheld; a second contingency being introduced, of which I had never dreamed, and which I should have regarded as an insuperable objection to re-entering the service.

Owing partly to this rebuff, and partly to the demands on my attention arising out of Lord Ashley's motion for the total abolition of Sunday work, I took no further active measure towards the improvement of my position for several months. Perhaps I might have been willing to wait yet longer, but for two causes; first, that my health, owing to recent labour, anxiety, and mortification, was now suffering more grievously than ever before; and, second, that services continued to be demanded of me which, on my actual footing, I was quite unable to perform. The failure of my health constrained me during this year, in spite of every effort, and though I was paying no inconsiderable sum yearly out of my own pocket for extraneous help, to take frequent rest sometimes for a day or two, sometimes for a week, and once for more than a month; my complaint was a tendency of blood to the head; and it has always been my opinion that at this time were sown the seeds of the disorder which, subsequently aggravated by other painful circumstances, eventually compelled me finally to withdraw from duty at a period when otherwise there would have remained to me, to the best of my belief, several years of useful service; a retirement

which nothing but the subsequent appointment of my brother Frederic as assistant secretary could have enabled me to delay so long.

Being, however, again pressed repeatedly to undertake duties beyond my power, I at length resolved to make another effort to obtain what I knew to be the only change that could give me a fair chance of retaining my health, and at the same time of successfully performing the important duties for which I was responsible, or even of completing the reforms which I had held up to public expectation fourteen years ago.

Again, therefore, I sought the aid of my ever-zealous friend, Mr. Warburton; zealous indeed he must have been, or long ere this he would have been tired of my claims and even of the public interest on which they were based.

In my letter (Appendix F.) I pointed out that four years had elapsed since the promise of speedy promotion was made, and two years since I first claimed its performance; and that though no objection was raised to the justice of my claim, no steps had been taken towards its practical acknowledgment. I showed the utter insufficiency of my present staff for the enormous amount of work now devolving upon me, and the impracticability of giving me an adequate force without either making me Chief Secretary or incurring an unwarrantable expense of several thousands a year. I referred to the injury done to my health by excessive labour, and the impossibility, under present circumstances, of my obtaining due rest. I referred to improvements effected, particularly the reform of the Money Order Department, to savings actually made, and to others in prospect. Lastly, I begged that if Government were still of opinion that it could not immediately fulfil its promise; a period might now be fixed beyond which

the complete performance of the promise should not be delayed, and that arrangements should be at once made for the nearest approximation to such performance that might be deemed practicable.

Mr. Warburton, with his usual kind alacrity, promised to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer without delay, and to let me know the result. This interview was unsatisfactory; for though the Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted my claim, spoke highly of me, and said I was in reality the Chief Secretary, he promised no more than that I should succeed to the post if there occurred a vacancy at once suitable and acceptable to Colonel Maberly; though, upon Mr. Warburton's pressing further, he expressed readiness to give me more assistance, or to exercise his patronage in favour of any member of my family, and promised to see me on the subject generally.

Upon my showing the Postmaster-General a copy of my letter to Mr. Warburton, and reporting all that had passed, he admitted that Government was afraid of being attacked by the economists for extravagance if they allowed Colonel Maberly to retire on full salary. Nevertheless, he cordially approved of what had been done, and volunteered to speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself, and to back all that Mr. Warburton had urged.

Two days later he reported progress, informing me that the Chancellor of the Exchequer wished to see him and me together, but adding that he had objected to this for himself, partly because he was going immediately to Ireland. He advised, however, against any attempt to establish a coequal secretariate, but said there would be no difficulty about raising my salary, and spoke of my having six months' holiday before taking Colonel Maberly's place, and of appointing a second assistant-secretary

to relieve me of routine duty. In short, he showed clearly that he was desirous of the change.

I accordingly wrote next day to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, inquiring when I should wait upon him, and enclosing a copy of the whole correspondence on the subject of my position, commencing with my letter to Mr. Hawes of November 3rd, 1846, and ending with that to Mr. Warburton of November 15th, 1850. I then called on Warburton to report progress. He was in high spirits, and now thought we should succeed.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that, as he was going into the country, he must postpone seeing me till after his return; but that he would take the correspondence with him and read it meantime. On the same day (December 19th) I received a letter from my brother Frederic, who had gone at my request to Manchester to see Mr. Cobden, relative to economic opposition, in which he informed me that he had been received in the most friendly manner; that Mr. Cobden, on his return to town, would talk over the matter with Mr. Hume, Mr. Villiers, and others, with a view to their acting together, and that meantime he authorized him (my brother) to say that he would back me in everything that I might think necessary for carrying out my plans, including the retirement of Colonel Maberly on full pay. On my brother's return, I learnt that though Mr. Cobden engaged to defend Government in the House if attacked for allowing Colonel Maberly to retire on full salary, he objected to give in writing a guarantee to be shown to the Postmaster-General, unless Mr. Hume would move in the same direction. At all events he advised that Mr. Hume should at once be applied to, and thought Mr. Warburton the best man to make this application. Mr. Warburton preferred to do this by letter, and eventually decided on merely

suggesting to Mr. Hume that he should see me on the subject.

Accordingly, after some correspondence with Mr. Hume, I arranged to meet him at Norwich, where he expressed concurrence with Mr. Cobden, and undertook to write to him on the subject, but wished to consult other members before signing any paper to be used by Government. He was exceedingly earnest in the matter, and reminded me of a speech he made in 1846, urging on the Whig Government, just then come into power, the necessity for placing me in the Post Office.

Meanwhile I prepared for use in my expected interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer a statement of improvements effected in the previous two years; a step the more needful, as it might well have been supposed, seeing how much my attention was occupied during the main part of this time with the agitation respecting Sunday observance and with attempts to rectify my own position, that the course of improvement had been entirely suspended. Serious as was the check from these causes, and particularly from the former, which had involved me in a sort of life and death struggle, there was quite enough to show that time had not been allowed to pass unprofitably; and I may add that, even when my personal attention was most largely withdrawn, inquiries and preparations which I had set on foot were constantly paving the way for the improvements then in hand.

On the Chancellor of the Exchequer's return to town after the absence of nearly a month, I again applied for an interview, but again met with postponement; and it was not until a fortnight later that the desired opportunity was obtained. I looked upon these delays as very unpromising.

Meanwhile I was not quite idle; but upon my calling on Mr. Warburton to suggest a further move,

he advised that I should not take the step proposed without first consulting Mr. Hume, lest he should be offended. He recommended that Mr. Hume and Mr. Cobden, upon coming to town for the session (it was now January, 1851), should settle the question referred to them before anything else was done.

Meantime efforts were renewed in another quarter; the Postmaster-General himself speaking to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who explained the delay which had occurred, and promised to see me in a day or two. Lord Clanricarde informed me that a vacancy was expected in the chairmanship of the Audit Office, to which it was intended that Colonel Maberly should be appointed. This would have been most satisfactory could I have relied on prompt action; but as I was not to allow my knowledge of such expectation to appear even in my conference with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and as meantime objections on unsatisfactory grounds were raised against my being at once placed on full equality with Colonel Maberly, I could feel no confidence in the result.

After sleeping on the matter I decided that the Chancellor of the Exchequer must be pressed. A case had just occurred in which importunity had induced him to yield to claims which I regarded as at best but ill-founded, and I thought that the same expedient might work as well where the claim was undeniable. I accordingly wrote as follows:—

'General Post Office, 29th January, 1851.

'Dear Sir,

'It is so very important that my case should be decided without further delay, that I must beg to be excused for proposing that, if possible, the interview you were so good as to promise me may not be any longer deferred.

'Yours faithfully,

'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, &c., &c.'

I received by return of messenger the following reply :—

'D. S., January 29th, 1851.

'Dear Sir,

'Will you come here to-morrow (Thursday) at 5 P.M.?

'Yours truly,

'C. Wood.

'R. Hill, Esq.

'I had written this before your man came.'

I of course wrote at once to say I would be there.

'*January* 30*th*.—Went to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's with documents to sustain my case as set forth in the correspondence. Asked if he had read the correspondence. He replied he had read the greater part. * * * Urged that I had fulfilled the only condition on which my position depended, and claimed the fulfilment of his part of the compact. He at once admitted my claim, qualifying the promise, however, to mean that I am to succeed Maberly on the occurrence of a vacancy. This is not what was understood at the time, as I told him. He says that as soon as any office in his gift suitable for Maberly becomes vacant, M. shall be removed to it (he did not say that he had any immediate expectations of a vacancy) but that I must wait patiently, &c.; that he should not be justified in pensioning M. at his time of life, as this would violate a rule which, though it acts disadvantageously in some cases, is on the whole beneficial. On my admitting that there was truth in this view of the subject, but pressing that all this should have been considered before the promise was given, and that it was unfair to induce me to accept office by holding out expectations unless Government saw their way to their fulfilment in a reasonable time, he said, standing up and leaning his back against the wall, as he is accustomed to do, "We may talk in this way till we are both black in the face, but it's of no use. I can't do it yet." He then said earnestly and cordially that I had fully realised the expectations of my most sanguine friends, and that he would do all in his power to show his sense of my services. He would immediately raise my salary to 1500*l*. a year and "give me any amount of assistance I might require." On my remarking jocularly that he was

scarcely aware of the extent of this promise; that I wanted such a staff as M.'s, at a cost probably of 10,000*l.* a year; he replied that he "would give any reasonable amount of assistance." * * *

'In conclusion, I thanked him especially for his hearty recognition of my services, but added that I felt it my duty to state, "in the plainest language I could use," that I must consider what he proposed as only an instalment on my claim, * * * and that many important improvements must be deferred so long as the direct authority of Secretary to the Post Office is withheld from me.' * * *

'Saw Warburton and reported to him the result, which he considers satisfactory.'

'*January* 31*st.*—Received the following from Hume:—

Burnley Hall, 30th January, 1851.

My dear Sir,

I have had a letter from Mr. Cobden on the subject I wrote to him about, and on my arrival in London, on the 3rd of February, I shall have the pleasure of writing to you or seeing you, after I have had some conversation with Mr. Cobden, and some other persons.

I think your object may be attained, which will give satisfaction to yours sincerely,

Joseph Hume.

Rowland Hill, Esq., General Post Office.

'*February* 1*st.*—Moffatt called. Told him in confidence much that had occurred. He will join Hume and Cobden in doing what I want.'

'*February* 3*rd.*—Called on Cobden, who is just returned to town. Told him in confidence the greater part of what passed between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and myself. He will see Hume in the morning and will try to get him to settle matters without consulting any one else. * * * In the course of conversation I said I feared that the Sunday agitation had injured my influence with the public, but Cobden replied that it was no such thing; that I was "the most popular man in the world."'

In reference to my conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer I spoke to the Postmaster-

General on the subject of assistance, proposing that I should have as assistant secretary some one in whom I had entire confidence, and who would be able to take my place in case of my absence, and pointing out that for such duty a knowledge of Post Office details was unnecessary. His lordship expressed general concurrence, but said that he must speak on the subject with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. My wish was to obtain the appointment of my brother Frederic, but I forbore at the time to mention his name, as the Postmaster-General was in haste to reach the House of Lords.

To justify my selection I need only recount a few facts. My brother Frederic had been for sixteen years one of the Inspectors of Prisons; for twelve years in Scotland, and the remaining time in England. He was one of the first appointed under the Act of 1835, by which the office was created; and Lord John Russell, then Secretary of State for the Home Department, when assigning to the inspectors their districts, paid my brother the compliment of saying that he had given him Scotland because he knew that in that part of the kingdom there was most need of improvement.

On examination my brother found that, with the almost sole exception of the Glasgow Bridewell, which was under the governorship of an admirable prison reformer, Mr. Brebner, the Scottish prisons fully warranted such conviction, and that indeed the great majority, instead of being places of reform, were the abodes of idleness and disorder, and not unfrequently of drunkenness and riot; in a word, of general demoralization. Although invested with no other power than that of inspection and of making Reports to the Secretary of State, and, through him, to Parliament and the country, my brother, in a short time, effected a great change, obtained the removal of

a large number of bad officers, the appointment in their stead of persons qualified for their duties, including matrons (of whom till his nomination there had been only two or three in the whole of Scotland), with a proper corps of female assistants, and without waiting for the erection of new prisons, succeeded, in most instances, in inducing the local authorities at once to turn to the best account the buildings at their command.

After a time my brother was authorized by Government to frame a bill for remodelling the whole system of prison government in Scotland in accordance with his recommendations; and although this bill was a good deal altered, and, as my brother and I thought, much injured, in its passage through Parliament, the new system adopted under it was a great improvement on what had existed before; and by the appointment of a general board, of which my brother was chosen a member, a directing authority was established which removed many obstacles to improvement. Thus, long before he quitted Scotland to take an English district, every prison there had either been so altered as to become well fitted for its use, or, if beyond improvement, had been replaced by a new building; in every prison productive work had been introduced, motives to diligence supplied, treadmills and all other unproductive employment abolished, flogging and every kind of degrading punishment discontinued; good chaplains had everywhere been appointed, and provision made for ordinary elementary instruction; the health of the prisoners had much improved, good conduct had become the general rule, and, in many cases, means had been provided for maintaining some amount at least of supervision and friendly assistance after liberation. Finally, my brother practically showed that, under good arrangements, all

prisoners of ordinary health and strength, and committed for even a moderate period, may be made to defray the entire cost of their maintenance and custody.

Any one who compares the most enlightened demands of the present day with this statement of facts, and yet more, the series of recommendations contained in my brother's Reports, or more summarily in his work entitled 'Crime; its Amount, Causes, and Remedies,' will find that my account of his services contains no exaggeration.

Having carried the work of prison reform thus far in Scotland, he exchanged his Scottish for an English district; but although he was able to accomplish a good deal there, he found among the country justices of the peace, who have the general charge of the county prisons, far more of *vis inertiæ* than he had encountered in Scotland; and in the belief that in the Post Office, in conjunction with myself, he should have a new and wide field for the exercise of his knowledge of the principles of government and his powers of administration, and that he should be able to render me effectual assistance, he was ready to accept an appointment, should it be made, as assistant-secretary.

Of course I rejoiced at the prospect of constant aid from one of whose ability and trustworthiness I was so well assured; a prospect which, as the sequel will show, was amply realized.

Upon my speaking more explicitly, the Postmaster-General made no objection to the appointment of my brother Frederic, but feared that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would object to the necessary expense; an apprehension at which I could not but feel disappointed after all that had passed, but which, nevertheless, was confirmed on inquiry. Coupled with the announcement of this result, came new

cause of anxiety, viz., a warning that Ministers would resign if beaten on an impending motion of Mr. Disraeli's; and though, on the division, there was a majority in their favour, yet, as the difference was only fourteen, it was but too clear that the administration was by no means firm. It was important, therefore, to press on at once; and in pursuance of former movements I called upon Mr. Hume; but though I found him very friendly, he still objected to giving me the letter I wanted, intimating that he should shortly effect the object by something which he was to say in the House.

Naturally I could not share Mr. Hume's confidence, particularly as I could at best but conjecture the tenour of his proposed remarks; and I must add that though I have not the slightest doubt of Mr. Hume's perfect good faith and earnestness in the matter, I cannot find, either in my records or in my recollection, that the intention was ever fulfilled.

The following passage shows how kindly earnest Lord Clanricarde was on my behalf, even at a season of critical importance to himself:—

'*February* 22*nd.*—On reaching the office, found a note from the Postmaster-General, desiring to see me at once. Went to his house and found him busy writing a letter to the Treasury, recommending the advance of my salary. He tells me that Lord John Russell has tendered his resignation, and that they are all going out as soon as their successors are appointed.'

At my request he made an addition to his letter, for the purpose of securing the position of my clerks in the event of my being driven from office. After using every means to hasten action in the Treasury, he sent in the letter (which was very complimentary to me) by his private secretary.

The Treasury promptly replied, authorizing the

advancement of my salary in a letter, from which the following is an extract:—

'I am directed to acquaint your lordship that, in consideration of the services which Mr. Hill has rendered to the country, and the meritorious manner in which he has discharged his official duties, my Lords are pleased to sanction the additional salary recommended by your lordship.'

The importance of doing by times what must otherwise be done in haste had just now an exemplification which was near proving very troublesome; my impromptu attempt to secure justice to one set of clerks running an unforeseen risk of doing injustice to another.

It appeared that the mode by which I proposed to secure the interests of my clerks, viz., by placing them on the permanent establishment of the secretary's office, would in effect deprive a certain very good officer, not in my department, of a promotion long awaited and now apparently at hand; doing at the same time minor injury to many others. Finding that there was just cause of complaint, I wrote forthwith to the Treasury; and, after some little delay, obtained rectification; so that the gentleman in question received his promotion at once.

Again, however, the immediate alarm passed away. After fruitless attempts to form an administration, Lord Stanley withdrew, and ministers were reinstated. My great pleasure at this relief was, however, soon damped by the revival of former difficulties, the Treasury again pressing for that amalgamation of the two corps of letter-carriers which, without undivided authority, it would be, as I well knew and had often represented, impossible for me to effect, and highly dangerous to attempt. The Postmaster-General admitted the difficulty, and

undertook to speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject. In the meantime, pointing out to his lordship that the question of assistance had been left to him, I urged immediate action in this matter, but was told that, notwithstanding the delegation of authority, he must still consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He intimated that the Ministry were still in a precarious position. This appeared to me anything rather than a reason for delay; and I particularly pressed the appointment of an assistant-secretary, strengthening my former reasons with others of great weight.

'*March 24th.*—The Postmaster-General has spoken to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject of assistance. He thinks the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not object; but nothing can be decided till after the Budget has been brought forward.'

It will easily be believed that I was not a little impatient at these inexplicable and hazardous delays; but happily relief was coming.

'*April 8th.*—Last night the Ministers had an unexpectedly large majority on the question of the income tax, and they are now considered safe for the session. Spoke to the Postmaster-General on the subject of assistance.'

'*April 28th.*—The Postmaster-General, who is returned to town, is much pleased with my success in the North Western negotiation [to be explained hereafter], which I think has hastened the decision as to Frederic. He has seen the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and intimates that the matter is satisfactorily settled; but I am to see the Postmaster-General at his house to-morrow.'

'*April 29th.*—At the Postmaster-General's house. I am to prepare a letter to the Treasury and a minute recommending the appointment of an assistant-secretary to the Postmaster-General, and let the Postmaster-General see both in draft. Frederic is virtually appointed.'

'*May 5th.*—The Postmaster-General has returned the drafts with some verbal alterations only.'

'*May 6th.*—At Postmaster-General's house. He was going

to the Drawing Room, and could do no more than sign a fair copy of the letter to the Treasury. Will see minute tomorrow. Authorizes me to say that he will appoint Frederic. Intends to transfer the secretarial management of the Railway Department to me. * * * Hopes in the course of the summer that Maberly may be transferred to some other department.'

'*June 2nd.*—The Treasury authority for the appointment of an assistant-secretary to the Postmaster-General having been received, I lost no time in submitting it to the Postmaster-General, who, on my stating the anxiety on the subject of my poor father (now, I fear, on his death-bed), kindly filled up Frederic's appointment on the instant; and I immediately despatched Pearson to Tottenham with the news.'

'*June 7th.*—Thanked the Postmaster-General in my father's name for his kindness with reference to Frederic's appointment. Obtained leave of absence for Frederic, in order that he may continue in attendance on my father. I have sent him work which he can do at Tottenham.'

'*June 13th.*—Attending the death-bed of my dear father. Till within a few hours of his dissolution he retained the command of his faculties, and took evident pains by signs (for he was too feeble to speak more than a word or two) to show his recognition of us all, and to satisfy us that he was quite happy. He died apparently without any pain, about half-past eight in the evening. I shall sadly miss his warm and intelligent sympathy. Nothing was so acceptable to him, even up to the time of my visiting him last night, as an account of any improvements in progress in the Post Office.'

My father died in his eighty-ninth year—a longevity not unprecedented in our family. So remarkable was his retention of mental power, that in this his last illness he devised a new process for ascertaining, by mental arithmetic, the incidence of Easter Sunday in any given year; a process which, at his desire, I put to the test of practice, with a result completely satisfactory.*

* In the Appendix (G.) will be found a brief memoir of my father, extracted from the Annual Report of the Royal Astronomical Society.

To return to the subject of this narrative.

In thus accepting the offer of assistance, I could not but feel that, notwithstanding all my protestations, I weakened my present claim to that great change, so long the object of my desire, since concession, however insufficient, could not be closely followed by further demand. Nevertheless, so great was the pressure upon me, so serious the danger of my breaking down altogether, that I had no alternative. Some estimate of my difficulties may be formed from the following simple statement. Though reference was made to me in all cases of serious difficulty, whatever their nature, and though the secretarial charge of the Money-Order Department was exclusively in my hands, the amount of assistance at my command hitherto was limited to my private secretary and four or five clerks, while that under Colonel Maberly consisted of a private secretary, an assistant-secretary, competent to act as an occasional deputy, and probably not less than fifty or sixty clerks. Still I naturally regarded the late accession to my force, particularly as it gave me the aid of my brother, with great satisfaction.

CHAPTER VI.

PROGRESS OF REFORM FROM THE BEGINNING OF 1849 TO THE MIDDLE OF 1851.

HAVING thus carried the general narrative to this important point, I pause to describe those concurrent proceedings which could not be conveniently mentioned in their chronological order, remarking, however, that the chief improvements effected within the period have been mentioned as they took place, and that those of my readers who have little desire to know more on the subject may easily pass over so much as they please of what follows. For their convenience, as also that of others, I resort to classification.

MONEY ORDER DEPARTMENT.

Extension.

It may be remembered that soon after my second appointment this department had been placed under my exclusive secretarial superintendence, and that various improvements had already been made in its management. During the period now under consideration these were carried forward with considerable rapidity. As a specimen, I may mention that in the first half of the year 1851 upwards of two hundred new offices were opened.

Economy, Self Support.

Various measures of economy were also adopted;

not, for the most part, of sufficient importance to be mentioned in detail, though of considerable value in their aggregate effect. One, however, by its magnitude, claims distincter record, being the release for other duties of such a number of clerks as reduced the Money Order staff, in proportion to its amount of business, by nearly forty per cent.; an economy effected by the mere simplification of accounts and modes of procedure; and two others may be mentioned as curious, the first being a saving of probably about 800*l.* a year through the substitution for guard books of an apparatus invented by Mr. Walliker, one of the clerks (now Postmaster of Hull), and the second the saving of 700*l.* a year by a mere reduction, and that not the first, in the size of the letter of advice.

By the various improvements thus introduced into the Money Order Office since it came under my superintendence it was found—the accounts being at length for the first time balanced—that the annual loss of more than 10,000*l.* had been converted into a small gain.

It should be mentioned that, in fetching up the arrear of accounts, debts, which ought long since to have been claimed, were found owing by various deputy postmasters, and had to be recovered, in some instances, of their sureties; a proceeding sometimes involving much hardship. In one case, at Bilston, where the payment thus enforced amounted to 230*l.*, the delinquent postmaster had been dead some years.

Condition of Clerks Improved.

The Money Order Department being thus made self-supporting, I felt justified in recommending not only a considerable increase in the salaries of the probationary clerks, but also an addition to those of the lowest grade on the staff. I was also enabled to

extend and regulate the leave of absence in the department. A few months afterwards, the Postmaster-General thus described the latter measure in the Upper House, reporting afterwards that the Lords were much struck with it:—

'The clerks in the Money Order Office were divided into classes, and twelve were counted in a class where it was calculated that eleven could do the work, so that by this means one might be always absent, and thus every clerk enjoy a month's leave of absence in the year. Now that was not an unjust nor a severe arrangement, but much more just and impartial than the old system, by which one clerk might be away for a considerable time, and another could get no leave of absence at all. They were allowed to work for one another, and in case of illness, if the absentee was away more than a month, he might have his work done by paying for it. This had been agreed to by all the classes but two; and there was now in the Money Order Department of the Post Office a case of a gentleman who had been ill for eleven months during the last two years, and his colleagues worked for him without a penny of remuneration, knowing that he really was ill and unable to attend himself.'*

New Head of Department.

In the course of this period, on the sudden death of Mr. Barth, the vacancy was filled, much to my satisfaction, by the appointment of Mr. Jackson, who had zealously seconded me in improving the department, and who, I am glad to say, still retains his post (1868), much to the advantage of the service and the benefit of the public.

A Paradox.

There remains only to mention a ludicrous perplexity, showing how easy it is, amidst complicated changes, for even those who have best opportunity

* 'Hansard,' vol. cxiv. p. 273.

of judging, and are most interested in arriving at the truth, to fall into misconception. In the early part of 1850 we remarked, to our surprise, a falling off in the number of letters passing through the Inland Office, and speculated much as to its cause. Mr. Bokenham attributed it to a decrease in Sunday letter-writing; but the mystery was at length explained by our simply calling to mind that the natural effect of a recent improvement in the Money Order Department was to relieve the Inland Office of about forty-six thousand packets per week, a number somewhat more than enough to account for the decrease.

Small Savings—Large Economy.

Small as may appear the immediate results of some of these measures, their importance was nevertheless considerable, not only as tending to swell the aggregate, but also because of their effect in stopping up waste-gaps, which, if unchecked, are sure to enlarge.

GENERAL ECONOMIC MEASURES.

Benefit of Comparisons.

The benefit of my plan of comparing office with office received in this period a striking confirmation. The ——— postmaster had repeatedly applied for increase of force, his applications being backed by two successive surveyors. These demands I had uniformly resisted, pointing out, in general terms, the means of performing the work with the present force; which, however, had always been declared impracticable; but, getting more information, I drew up a detailed plan, which was eventually adopted, the surveyor now discovering that the chief fault lay in

the idleness of the postmaster, who, in consequence of this and other yet more serious misconduct, was at length dismissed.

Passing over numerous small savings, some, however, amounting to hundreds a year, I mention a few others of greater amount or more marked character.

Clerks in Charge.

There was an abuse demanding correction, of which the following is a specimen. A clerk in the chief office, in receipt of about 82*l.* per annum, was sent to act temporarily as clerk to one of the surveyors, and, for one cause or other, his exceptional employment was prolonged from two months to fourteen. Further, it happened that during two months of the fourteen he had charge of the Gloucester post office. By this lucky combination of circumstances, his emoluments for the time were at the annual rate of 452*l.*, or between five and six times his ordinary income. I took some steps with a view of putting things on a juster footing, but found the abuse too strongly sustained to allow me much hope of removing it until I should obtain more uncontested authority.

Prepayment.

I again considered the question of totally abolishing prepayments in money: both Mr. Tilley and Mr. Johnson (the excellent surveyor of the home district), whom I consulted, agreed in the practicability of the measure, and spoke strongly of its importance, as greatly simplifying, and therefore economising, the mechanism of the department; but, for fear of inconvenience to the public, I hesitated to take the step all at once. To Mr. Tilley, however, I mentioned, in confidence, a plan which I had conceived for dealing with unpaid letters, viz., that

wherever posted they should be sent in the first instance to the Metropolitan office, thence to be forwarded to their respective destinations; an arrangement tending much to economy, as it would have wholly superseded the "by-accounts," *i. e.*, the accounts between one provincial office and another. This device I must myself have afterwards forgotten, for certainly it was never acted upon. Some years later, it was attempted to make prepayment in respect of inland letters absolutely compulsory; but public objection proving too strong, the attempt was abandoned. I believe that this forgotten plan would still be the best step towards attaining the desired end.

Mail Conveyance.

I discovered instances in which the serious expense of railway conveyance was incurred, when, speed being unimportant, a cheaper mode served equally well. It is obviously of no use to a place that its letters should arrive in the middle of the night, every purpose being answered if they come in time to be included in the earliest practicable delivery. Consideration of this led me to propose, in such cases, the substitution of mail-carts. In one such case this year the effect was an annual saving of about 800*l.*, and in one in the following year more than 2000*l.* In the minute recommending this latter improvement I also pointed out other branch mails, chiefly in Ireland, costing probably 10,000*l.* a year, which ought never to have been established, though, as they were of some little use, it would have been difficult then to withdraw them.

In one of my visits to the Treasury, Mr. Hayter showed me a letter from the Postmaster-General proposing to establish a travelling post office between

Gloucester and Tamworth, on a plan sanctioned without reference to me. I was able at once to demonstrate to Mr. Hayter that, without any sacrifice, the expense could be reduced by about 700*l.* a year.

With the help of Mr. Cornwall, Secretary to the Irish Post Office, I was enabled to effect an improvement at Dublin, which had been proposed at an additional cost of £105 a year, in such manner as positively to reduce the annual expense by £280; the effect of the improvement being to give the Dublin people their letters two hours earlier than before. Soon afterwards, by changing the route between Dublin and Tralee, and substituting a car for a coach, I was able both to improve the service in the district, and to reduce the annual expense by £1285; and a little later by the withdrawal of two superfluous branch mails, combined with other changes, at once to benefit the correspondence and save annually £7000; thus making in a single district a total saving of more than £8000 a year.

A Summary.

In fine, a statement of the savings which, without counting the rejection of applications for needless increase of force or salary, I had secured by the end of 1850, either by prevention of unnecessary augmentation in expenditure, or by positive reductions, showed an amount of nearly £40,000 a year; although I believe my clerks, in hastily preparing the statement (for it was suddenly required) had made several omissions.

Further Economy in Conveyance.

The surveyor for the South of Ireland had recommended that the night mails to Waterford should be conveyed by a new line of railway between Carlow

and that city. The entry on the subject in my journal (13th of January, 1851) thus concludes:—

'On the Postmaster-General calling for my opinion, I was able to show that the adoption of such recommendation would cost about 10,000*l.* a year, that it would afford scarcely any convenience, * * * but that a day-mail * * * might be established at a comparatively small cost, and would be of great service to Waterford. The Postmaster-General has adopted my view.'

'*May* 22*nd*, 1851.—A short time since certain towns in the West Riding memorialized the Postmaster-General to despatch a mail by an existing express train direct to Boston. The company (the Great Northern) refused to undertake the service for less than a first-class fare each trip, or 540*l.* a year. The Postmaster-General called for my opinion. I offered the company 200*l.* a year; they refused, and the memorialists were informed that, owing to the excessive demands of the company, the mail [a very small one] must be withheld. This brought public opinion to act on the company, and, as I expected, they became suitors to us, first offering to reduce the charge to about 340*l.* a year, and ultimately consenting to charge the bags as parcels. On these terms we shall give a mail in *both* directions for about 200*l.* a year, or for little more than the third part of what was originally demanded for a mail in one direction.'

By other arrangements in England and Ireland, made without sacrifice of public convenience, additional saving in railway conveyance was effected to the annual amount of £3000; while a further saving, though of less amount, was produced by a change in the size and structure of the iron boxes used for the India mails.

General Contracts.

Early in 1851 the North Western Company made an offer professing to set aside arbitration, and to give the Post Office an almost unrestricted use of their present and future lines of railway, for 50,000*l.* a year, and both Colonel Maberly and our arbitrator

advised acceptance; but I advised a different arrangement; and after much negotiation, I made, with the Postmaster-General's concurrence, an offer which, while securing us against all arbitration, and otherwise making the covenant effective, would give the Company for its actual service the sum of 48,000*l.* a year, with provision for addition or reduction on increase or decrease of service. This offer the Company accepted, with the modification that, in recompense for still further concessions on its part, the annual sum should be raised to 49,000*l.* They also proposed to leave the determination of the payment for extra trains with myself, an arrangement to which it would have been very captious in me to object. The Postmaster-General and the Treasury both agreeing to the modified proposal, it was adopted, much to the advantage of all parties, the public, the Company, and the Post Office.

RURAL DISTRIBUTION.

On July 15th, 1850, I learned that the Postmaster-General had sanctioned what I regarded as a very important measure:—

'Hitherto no posts have been given except daily posts; henceforth, when the correspondence will not justify a daily post, one is to be given thrice or twice or once a week, according to a fixed scale, under which the amount of correspondence is compared with the cost of the post. Thus, at a comparatively small cost, the postal system will, I hope, be extended to nearly every house in the kingdom.'

This measure, however, though sanctioned by the Treasury, and ordered to be carried into immediate effect, remains even to this day, notwithstanding constant progress, still incomplete, mainly, I believe, through objections on the part of the surveyors to the apparent anomaly of intermittent posts; though the necessary consequence is that many houses, and

perhaps even some hamlets must remain altogether unvisited by the postman.

PACKET SERVICE.

The following proceeding took place with regard to the mails to North America. Being examined by the Transatlantic Steam-Packet Commission, I proposed, as a means of saving much time, that the mail-packets, though still starting from Liverpool, should touch both ways at Holyhead, there embarking or disembarking the whole mail. At the same time I was asked to prepare a confidential memorandum on the subject of an experimental despatch from Galway, which I did accordingly, the results of my investigation, however, not being such as in my opinion to justify the experiment.

I scarcely need add that some years later the course thus deprecated was taken by Government, not indeed in expectation of profitable results, but as a concession to Irish demands; that the attempt was altogether unsuccessful, and besides absorbing a large sum from the revenue, threw disastrous loss on all that held shares in the packets.

POSTAL TREATIES.

Although postal treaties with foreign countries had but little direct connection with my particular reforms, yet their indirect bearing was important; and still greater their relation to the general postal interests of the country; so that though ever since my removal from the Treasury they had been managed for the most part without reference to me, I nevertheless had now frequent opportunities of suggesting improvements, and eventually the arrangement fell almost entirely into my hands.

The Postmaster-General directed my attention to the state of our treaty with France. The British Office had proposed that the international rate should be reduced from tenpence to sixpence, but this was objected to by the French Government, because it was coupled with a demand for an equitable division of postage between the two Offices. It may be remembered that through a blunder made by our Office in 1843, an undue advantage was given to France, which I then estimated at 4000*l.* per annum; but by a modification made subsequently to my reappointment, but entirely without my knowledge, our annual loss had been raised to 8000*l.* I explained all this to the Postmaster-General, and he regretted that I had not been consulted in the matter; he thought, however, that the French Government could not refuse such concession as would at least rectify the latter error.

'*March* 15*th*, 1850.—At the Postmaster-General's house. He is about to visit Paris, and intends to treat for a reduction in the international rate. He is anxious at the same time to correct the blunder in the treaty exposed by me in 1843, under which we lose many thousands a-year in accounting with France for our share of the postage collected there. After a careful consideration of the subject, we are both obliged to admit that if the French Government should insist upon continuing this part of the treaty, as they doubtless will, there is now no escape.'

The Postmaster-General had been led to suppose that the original error was committed at the Treasury; but I was able to satisfy him that, so far from such being the case, the Treasury had, on my report, carefully warned the Post Office on the very point.

Previously to his departure, the Postmaster-General called upon Colonel Maberly and myself to advise him as to the object of his negotiation. On my part, past errors in the department rendered the task very

difficult, but I was fortunate enough to perform it in a manner satisfactory to the Postmaster-General, while the course recommended by Colonel Maberly would have involved a further loss of 3000*l.* a year. As the matter stands at the present time (1868), the annual loss in our transactions with the French Post Office, by irretrievable errors, is probably not less than 10,000*l.* Surely, whatever might be the real motives to Colonel Maberly's retention in office, they could not include a regard for economy, since his absence would have been cheaply purchased even at ten times the amount of his salary. It must be admitted, however, that Government is sometimes deterred from doing what is right by a doubt as to whether it is also what is plausible. In other words, there are cases in which Parliamentary control and public opinion, ordinarily so beneficial, produce real harm.

BOOK POST.

Towards the close of 1850 I obtained a sanction for a reduction in the book rate to and from the Colonies from one shilling and sixpence per pound weight to one shilling; and by the middle of the following year, Canada, the Ionian Islands, and Heligoland, having consented to the change, were brought under the new rate.

Meantime experience had shown that modifications were desirable at home, and I procured such relaxation as included in the inland book-post any papers (except letters), whether written or printed, with binding loose or attached, and any number of volumes or pieces under one cover.

A step was meanwhile taken towards the extension of the book-post to foreign countries, application being made to the Prussian Government, with the concurrence of both the Postmaster-General and the

Chevalier Bunsen (then Prussian Minister in England), to substitute our book-post (as already arranged for the Colonies) for the ridiculous pamphlet-post of the existing treaty.

SALARIES AND PROMOTIONS.

On the subject of salaries I found a strange, not to say ludicrous, discrepancy between form and practice. The clerks were, indeed, very properly arranged in classes, the salaries varying according to position, and promotion taking place as vacancies occurred, on formal attestation of a candidate's fitness for the duties of the higher class; but all this formal propriety was rendered nugatory by the simple fact that difficulty of duties did not correspond with rank of class, so that Government was really paying 300*l.* or 400*l.* a-year to clerks whose work was nowise superior in quality or quantity to that performed by others whose annual salary was but 70*l.** All this I pointed out to Mr. Hayter, who was quite unaware of the anomaly, and thought it must be peculiar to the Post Office; but, admitting that the odium of rectification should not rest upon me alone, he promised to use his influence to get a Commission appointed for the revision of salaries generally. The Chancellor of the Exchequer hesitated to adopt the suggestion; but, as applications were coming in for particular augmentations which could not be satisfactorily dealt with until some general principle was adopted and reduced to a rule, I obtained authority to press the matter on the Treasury. Although, however, this was done, and although after the lapse of a year the

* A striking instance of this mal-arrangement was reported to me long afterwards. A very meritorious officer appointed by Colonel Maberly, and said to be the first ever admitted into the permanent staff save through political influence, had, during several years, while rated at a salary never exceeding £120, to superintend men whose salaries ranged up to £400.

Postmaster-General himself wrote a minute on the subject, yet a second year passed before this important step was taken.

RECTIFICATION OF ACCOUNTS.

As already shown, I had striven to present to the public mind a true statement as to the fiscal results of my reforms, or, to speak yet more comprehensively, as to the real earnings of the Post Office. This struggle was forced upon me by constant attempts to lead the public mind into error on this important point. That which I have repeatedly spoken of as the fallacious return was, in one form or other, ever and anon revived, nor is misconception altogether removed even at the present moment. Of other corrections, also, I have already spoken, and I purpose now to continue the narrative.

'*January* 30*th*, 1849.—Showed the Postmaster-General a requisition which I have prepared for a return to Parliament, showing the real earnings of the Post Office by including in the revenue the net proceeds of the newspaper stamps, and in the expenditure so much of the packet service as is fairly chargeable against the Post Office. He has no objection to its being moved for. My object is to neutralize, if I can, the mischief which Lord Seymour and others have done by getting returns charging the whole packet-service against the Post Office.'

Notice of motion having been accordingly given by my friend Mr. Thorneley, M.P. for Wolverhampton, the Treasury, as usual, referred to the Post Office, to learn whether there were any objection to granting the return; the consequence being that Mr. Tilley came to me, by Colonel Maberly's desire, to show me a note written in reply, in which, to my amusement, I found the opinion given that the return should be withheld, "in fairness to Mr. Hill." Of course I ex-

plained the whole matter to Mr. Tilley, and, the supposed obstacle being removed, the return was ordered without opposition, and the duty of preparing it was committed by the Postmaster-General to me.

Of the unfairness of charging the whole cost of the packet-service to the Post Office, I had striking evidence shortly afterwards.

'*March 3rd*, 1849.—The newspapers having stated that Government had contracted with the West India Steam-packet Company for carrying the mails to the Brazils, I asked the Postmaster-General if he had been consulted in the matter, and found that he had not; and further, that there had been no communication with the Office on the subject.'

So that, according to the practice of which I complained, the Post Office was made chargeable with heavy expenses, incurred not only without its request but without its consent or even knowledge. The inexpediency of such proceedings happened to receive further illustration on the same day; Mr. Cunard calling upon me (of course now too late) to say that he had come to England for the purpose of proposing to undertake the West Indian mails at half the price then paid for their conveyance, thus tantalising us by proving that an opportunity had been lost of saving 120,000*l.* per annum.

One source of error I closed by establishing the practice of checking the accounts of unpaid postage on letters from the Colonies, which had been previously omitted on the plea that the operation would seriously retard the delivery of the letters. Upon experiment, the loss of time per packet was found in the outset to be twenty minutes, but by subsequent measures was altogether avoided, while the checking brought to light discrepancy in the accounts amounting to hundreds of pounds.

In a return called for by the House of Lords, I found that the number of letters for the year had

been arrived at by treating the year as consisting of twelve months of four weeks each, so that the total given was that for forty-eight weeks instead of fifty-two.

It would have been hardly fair to mislead the House of Lords without doing the same good office to the House of Commons. Accordingly, upon the Lower House calling for a return of the amount of transit postage paid to France, the sum reported, without any note to prevent misunderstanding, instead of being the total amount, was merely the balance of account between the two Offices. After recording this fact, my journal proceeds as follows:—

'It is a very rare thing for a return to reach me which does not contain some egregious error.'

Fortunately I saw the return before its issue, and it was of course corrected.

'*July* 18*th*, 1850.—Every now and then something almost incredibly absurd and mischievous in the management of the Post Office turns up. Some investigations in which I have lately been engaged have brought to light the astounding fact that for the payment of a large part of our expenses (hundreds of thousands a year probably) we have no vouchers, and yet there is a pretence of auditing our accounts. The fact is, that the salaries and wages of the clerks, letter-carriers, &c., at the country offices, together with heavy expenses for carrying mails, &c., are paid by the postmasters, and allowed in their accounts, but no evidence is required that the payments are actually made; and instances have occurred in which postmasters have gone on taking credit year after year for payments on account of mails, &c., which have been suppressed. The postmasters at —— and —— were both detected in this fraud.'

The following shows that six months later blundering remained unabated:—

'*January* 23*rd*, 1851.—A *balanced* account of revenue for the quarter ending 10th October last has been sent to me

through Maberly's office, containing a gross error; an advance from the English to the Irish Office being so managed as apparently to increase the balance in hand for the *United Kingdom* by 40,000*l.*!'

'*January 25th.*—The Accountant-General persists in it that his account is correct. (I wish it were; a means would then have been devised by which we might readily increase the balance in hand to any extent.) He will, however, alter it, if I "desire it!"—as though it could be a matter of choice whether the balance can be increased by 40,000*l.* or not.'

STAMPS.

The arrangement for supplying the public with stamps, though improved, still remained exceedingly imperfect, and meantime a new duty seemed likely to devolve upon us, the Stamp Office proposing that all postmasters and receivers should act as vendors of receipt stamps, a proposal to which I saw no objection, but which, for certain reasons, was subsequently abandoned.

Pending this negotiation I obtained sanction to measures for securing a constant supply of postage stamps at the various provincial post offices and rural receiving-houses, and for enforcing greater punctuality in the remittances, the provision as regards stamps having hitherto been so insufficient that particular postmasters sometimes sold not a single stamp throughout a whole year.

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL EXTENSION.

United States.

While my attention was, of course, mainly absorbed in the improvement of our own postal system, I always rejoiced to hear of corresponding progress abroad, whether in the colonies or in foreign countries; the more so as all such advancement at once confirmed my views, increased my influence, and facilitated further action

'*January 8th*, 1849.—Some one has sent me, from New York, a copy of the American Postmaster-General's Annual Report. Their reduction to two rates at Midsummer, 1845, has been very successful. Previously to that time the Post Office did not pay its expenses, and the distribution was curtailed from year to year in a vain attempt to make it pay. Now with extended distribution and reduced rates (on the average about half the preceding rates) the Post Office has a surplus income. The Postmaster-General recommends making the lower rate (5 cents = 2½*d.*) general, and requiring prepayment. This is the more satisfactory as he opposed the reduction in 1845.'

These favourable accounts were confirmed by reports subsequently received, from which I learned that the revenue in 1849, both gross and net, had been larger than in any former year. I received yet further assurance on the subject from my friend Mr. Forster, who, visiting the United States in the year 1850, made, at my request, inquiries on the spot. In short, Congress was so well satisfied with the result of its previous reductions, that early in the year 1851, it changed what had been its minimum rate, viz., twopence-halfpenny, into its maximum, establishing a three-halfpenny rate for distances under three thousand miles.* At the same time it adopted our plan of doubling the charge on letters posted unpaid.

Austria.

On June 13th, 1849, an envoy from the Austrian Government came for information as to the results of penny postage, which was of course given. He went over the office, and was astonished at the magnitude of our operations.

* In effect California was the only State not reached at the lower rate.

India.

'*December* 21*st*, 1849.—Porter (Secretary to the Board of Trade) called with a letter which he had received from Lord Dalhousie, requesting him to see me with reference to the introduction of a low uniform rate of postage into British India. I, of course, promised to assist.'

Mr. Porter showed me the letter, and I learnt, much to my amusement, the reason why Lord Dalhousie had not addressed me more directly. He mentioned that he had formerly been acquainted with me; but feared I might, by this time, have forgotten him. It will be seen hereafter how successfully this first move was followed up.

France and Russia.

Early in 1850 I received from M. Piron a copy of a report showing the results obtained during the past year, the first in France of reduced postage. Though it was a time of great commercial depression, the gross postal revenue had fallen but twenty-two per cent., while the number of letters had increased by thirty per cent.; at the same time the proportion of prepayments had risen from ten per cent. to twenty-five, notwithstanding that the charge was alike on prepaid and post paid; a remarkable indication of the convenience of stamps, showing that when, in 1839, Mr. Spring Rice proposed, without any reduction of postage, to try "the principle of stamps," his proposal might have proved not so absolute a mockery as I then supposed it to be. I could not but regard the results in France as satisfactory for the time; but it appeared that the Chamber of Deputies was dissatisfied, so that M. Piron feared that the distinction of distance would be revived, and the maximum rate raised to threepence,

though the Postmaster-General wisely demanded, by preference, an additional fee on post-paid letters, urging the great convenience to the department of habitual prepayment by stamps; an expedient which, when originally suggested, was treated by our Post Office as a downright bugbear. The same report referred also to satisfactory results of the uniform rate in Russia.

The day that brought this information brought also from the United States the President's Message to Congress, which led to the change mentioned at page 162.

General Summary.

In short, I was able truly to remark, in my speech at Greenock already referred to, that cheap postage was gradually extending throughout the civilized world.

DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITY.

The following is given less on account of its intrinsic importance than as a somewhat amusing instance of the game at cross-purposes arising from the divided responsibility of the time.

Complaints came up from Liverpool in consequence of a change which required that letters for Ireland should be posted by two o'clock instead of six, an alteration arising out of the transfer of the London day mail for Ireland from the Liverpool to the Holyhead route, a change very good in itself, but not necessarily involving this local inconvenience. I pointed out to the Postmaster-General the means of rectification, and had the satisfaction of finding that, with the exception of one detail, that of sorting on board the packets, he liked my plan very much; he even showed that it was free from certain difficulties, which, through misinformation, I had sup-

posed it involved. At his request, I undertook to examine further into the whole question, and in the course of three days having readjusted the plan, I reported as much to Mr. Cornwall, requesting him to arrange with the Postmaster-General for an early interview, but learnt, to my surprise, that the Postmaster-General had already decided the whole matter by approving of a minute of Colonel Maberly's. This Mr. Cornwall produced, when I was amused to find that it contained my own plan, though with some points omitted, there being, in particular, no provision for sorting on the way, for want of which, the letters, on arriving in Dublin, would not be ready for the morning delivery, but would have to wait the delivery at mid-day. I found also that the plan thus put forth, and which was commended as an excellent arrangement, was attributed not to myself, but to another gentleman. Without staying to contest this point, I wrote a minute, suggesting the addition of the omitted parts, with some other minor improvements which had occurred to me subsequently; and, the Postmaster-General having informed me that this minute was adopted, I supposed the matter to be set at rest.

Nearly a fortnight later, however, I received from the Postmaster-General a minute, by which it appeared that my minute, instead of being adopted had been referred to Colonel Maberly for his opinion, Lord Clanricarde informed me that the matter would come before him again; and added that he had directed the subsequent minutes on the subject to be referred to me. Two days later, upon my clerk's applying for these papers, he was informed that they had already been approved; and that instructions founded upon them were already issuing to the surveyors and other officers. The papers, however, showed that the plan had again been altered, and

this in such manner as to involve heavy expense, and the certainty of much dissatisfaction. I therefore called upon the Postmaster-General to learn his real wishes as to my dealings with the Irish mail, and, by his direction, wrote a minute on the subject, which I sent to him forthwith. A week later, upon my inquiring as to his decision, he expressed surprise that I had not been informed of it already, saying that he had settled the matter several days ago. Nevertheless, it was not until eight days later that I received the papers, when I found that the decision had been a compromise, most of my recommendations having been adopted, but with no provision for sorting on the way. Though I did not like this imperfection, yet, thinking that I had carried pertinacity as far as was allowable, I was fain to leave the rest to right itself as best it might.

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

In the year 1849, on the application of Mr. J. L. Ricardo, chairman of the Electric Telegraph Company (I believe there was then but one), I obtained for the Company the concession of a small room within the office for telegraphic purposes; the department being allowed in return to send messages at a low rate.

RURAL DISTRIBUTION.

I have already spoken of an arrangement whereby the inhabitants of a district whose correspondence was too small to defray the expense of a post were enabled to obtain that convenience by taking the cost upon themselves. Of course, such correspondence, however limited, produced at least something; in certain instances, indeed, nearly the whole required amount; while nevertheless, in every case,

however close the approximation, the guarantors had been called upon for full payment; I now, however, procured the sanction of the Postmaster-General to a rule, afterwards confirmed by the Treasury, by which they would merely have to make up the deficiency.

NUMBER OF LETTERS.

In 1849 the year's increase of letters was unusually small, though, perhaps, as great as could be expected in a time of so much political agitation and commercial depression. The increase next year (1850) was but little larger; the two, however, making up a total of three hundred and forty seven millions, and raising the increase under penny postage to about $4\frac{2}{3}$-fold.

REVENUE.

The resulting revenue also had, by this time, as measured by the gross amount, nearly fulfilled my original prediction, being within 82,000*l.* or less than four per cent. of that received in 1838. That the net revenue had not kept pace with my expectations was due not only to the various errors in management, and obstacles to economy already mentioned, but also, in great degree, to the abandonment of charge for secondary distribution, and the increasing demands of the railway companies.

Perhaps, even to this day, the public are but little aware how much the establishment of railways, so beneficial in regard to celerity and exactitude, has increased the expense of conveying the mails. To many the following entry will doubtless be startling, to some, perhaps, incredible :—

'*March* 28*th*, 1851.—I find on a comparison of accounts, that although the payments to railway companies for 1850

exceed 400,000*l.*, the payments for mail conveyance by ordinary roads were rather greater in 1850 than in 1838, when there was nothing paid to the railways; so that the whole expenditure in railways is an addition to the former cost of carrying the mails. This is the main cause of the *net* revenue falling below my estimate—indeed, it accounts for nearly the whole deficiency. The explanation is not so much the increased weight and frequency of mails (for off the railway such increase is not great) as the increased celerity of all our movements, the greater expense of conveyance on the bye-roads caused by the railways having absorbed their traffic, and the greater number of branch night mails, owing to the great extension of the limits of the night-work caused by the use of railways.'

REGISTRATION.

I obtained a return showing the results of the reduction (from one shilling to sixpence) in the registration fee, made in March, 1848. The increase in the number of registrations before the end of that year was about sixty-six per cent., and early in 1849, I believe, the revenue from registration was made up; a great convenience being thus afforded to the public, and the danger of dishonesty within the department much reduced, without any fiscal loss. As for the apprehended clog at the "forward offices,"* which had been so pertinaciously urged as an insurmountable objection to this improvement, it had never been even heard of in practice, and the very apprehension now seemed absolutely ludicrous.

I may remark, in passing, that I had pointed out, when the alarm was raised relative to the "forward offices," that by the mere expedient of sending any inconvenient surplus through the metropolitan office the whole difficulty would be surmounted. This mode was regarded at the time by the Post Office authorities as outrageously absurd; but a pressure on

* See Vol. i., p. 313.

a particular occasion being expected at the Newcastle office (not however in respect of forward letters), and the surveyor applying for instructions as to the manner of dealing with it, Colonel Maberly, after a consultation with Mr. Bokenham, quietly, and perhaps unconsciously, but certainly not a little to my amusement, adopted this very plan.

The increased safety produced by more frequent registration appeared in the fact that the number of applications relative to lost money-letters was diminished by about twenty-five per cent.

COLONIAL RATES.

In the course of the year 1850, I obtained sanction to a measure for reducing the postage to and from the colonies in all cases to one shilling, together with the abolition of all additional charges at either end, and for making prepayment either way optional.

INCIDENTS.

Mail Robbery.

'*January 2nd*, 1849.—Last night a serious robbery, chiefly of registered letters, one of which contained, it is said 4000*l.*, took place between Bridgewater and Bristol, in the up mail.'

'*January 3rd.*—The thieves (two) are taken; one is a discharged railway guard. They had the impudence to rob the down mail also the same night, and the Post Office guard having heard of the previous robbery, kept a good look-out. The property stolen from the down mail, including a packet of diamonds, is recovered—not that stolen from the up mail. There is an interval of about two hours between the two mails at Bristol, which the thieves probably employed in secreting the property first stolen. The newspapers are full of the particulars. Suggested to Colonel Maberly, through Tilley, precautionary measures with reference to this and other lines on which there are travelling post offices.'

In consequence of these suggestions, the Postmaster-General authorized me to employ some one to investigate the question as to the best mechanical means of securing the mail tenders against robbery, with a proviso, however, that the expense of the proceeding should not exceed twenty guineas. For this purpose I applied to my nephew, Mr. Ormond Hill, who devised three several plans; the effect of each of the first two, of which he made models, being to bring all control over the doors of the tenders within the travelling post offices, thus making security almost absolute; while the third consisted merely of such an arrangement of good locks and turn-handles as would make any omission or tampering obvious at a glance. The last was preferred, probably on account of its greater simplicity and cheapness, and has I believe proved efficacious.

Theft at Caermarthen.

'*February 2nd*, 1849.—Went upstairs to Mr. Ramsey's room to see the articles which have been stolen by the daughter of the Caermarthen postmaster. There is jewellery and haberdashery enough to stock a small shop, and 95*l.* in money. The woman has kept the letters (200 or 300) from which the articles were taken, so that many can be restored. It seems that she has indulged her thieving propensities for seven years.'

It appeared afterwards that her object had been to amass such a dowry as would give her good matrimonial prospects.

Anonymous Contribution.

'*January 23rd*, 1849.—Received an anonymous letter (post-marked Birmingham) containing 10*s.* in postage stamps, "Towards penny-postage memorial from a man too poor at the time to subscribe."'

A Striking Result.

The following shows one of the extraordinary results of cheap postage :—

'*June* 14*th*, 1849.—Last week's returns show that 3,100,000 letters [an unprecedented number] passed through the London office (general and district) in that period. On asking Bokenham for an explanation, he states that Hatchard, the publisher in Piccadilly, and a city house connected with him in the publication of a valuable Bible, are sending out 300,000 prospectuses of their Bible ; they are all in penny envelopes ; the postage would exceed 1200*l.*'

Official Vigilance.

I mention the following principally because of the vigilance shown on the occasion :—

'*Same day.*—An ingenious fraud has been attempted by a clerk at the Charing Cross office, named Lewis. By issuing money orders of higher numbers than those required for the day, and by not inserting these issues in the account till the arrears in the numbers had been brought up, and then again issuing numbers in advance, he contrived to borrow a considerable sum from the money-order fund ; the trick, however, was discovered by the clerks employed in the chief office, and by prompt measures the man was made to pay up the debt. The whole occurred in my absence, and great merit is due to Jackson and Bokenham for the energetic manner in which they proceeded. It seems that the man preaches on Sundays as a —— minister.'

Improved condition of Officials.

I received the following almost startling indications as to the amount of relief afforded within the last eleven years to Post Office officials :—

'*September* 10*th*, 1849.—Having occasion to refer to some papers connected with the Liverpool office of the year 1838, I

find it stated that, after a proposed increase of force, the clerks would be engaged from ten to twelve hours a day, besides occasional night-work; also that none of the letter-carriers would walk less than twenty miles a day, Sundays included. Such a state of things would now be viewed as monstrous.'

'*March* 26*th*, 1850.—Johnson and Tilley, in conversation to-day, said that it occupied as much time to sort and carry to account 1000 unpaid letters of various rates as 3000 stamped letters. I laughingly reminded them of the Post Office evidence to the contrary, which they admitted was altogether fallacious.'

Source of Dishonesty.

It has often been alleged that dishonesty in Post Office servants arises from insufficiency in their salaries. A better explanation would be found in the fact that under a system of patronage men are too often admitted into the service without sufficient inquiry as to character, and are retained there after their conduct has furnished such ground for suspicion as would lead to their being discarded from any well-conducted private establishment. And here it should be pointed out that the evils inherent in the system are often greatly aggravated by injudicious interference from the public, who regard such dismissals as a punishment which ought not to be inflicted without formal proof of some positive offence.

'*February* 11*th*, 1850.—Some months ago I caused ——, an Inland Office clerk, employed at the Charing Cross office in money-order business as extra clerk, to be removed therefrom under circumstances which raised a strong suspicion against his honesty. As there was no absolute proof of fraud, the proceeding was viewed as a harsh one, and the man was still continued as an Inland Office clerk, and very imprudently employed in the registration duties. He has now been detected in stealing five or six remittances from the deputy postmasters, amounting in all to about 200*l*.'

A worthy Promotion.

I had the misfortune in this period to lose one of my best officers; but happily my loss was his gain.

'*December* 31*st*, 1850.—To-morrow Godby succeeds to the vacant appointment of chief clerk in Colonel Maberly's office. I shall be sorry to lose him from the Money Order Department, but it would have been the height of injustice to oppose his promotion.'

My Son's Appointment.

This year (1850) my only son was nominated by the Postmaster-General to a clerkship in the secretarial department, commencing, of course, like others, in the lowest grade.

Letter-boxes.

The Great Exhibition of 1851, the first of the kind, being expected to produce a considerable increase in the work of the letter-carriers, a second notice was issued on the subject of the door letter-boxes, with the view of leading the public to their more general use. I may add that similar exhortations have followed at intervals up to the present time, and always with some effect. I am informed that such a notice in 1867 produced about eight thousand additional boxes.

Household Words and Quarterly Review.

There appeared in the course of the same year two interesting articles on postal proceedings. The first a lively description from the pen of Mr. Charles Dickens, published in the first number of 'Household Words;' the second a much longer and more elaborate treatise, though scarcely less amusing, from the pen of Sir

Francis Head, published in the 'Quarterly Review;' an ample amends for the attack in the same publication ten years before. With both gentlemen I had pleasing intercourse on the occasion, particularly so with the latter, who, requiring more extensive information, and taking great pains to get a correct notion of the leading principles of the whole system, necessarily passed more time in my company. His conversation I found as amusing as his writings.

I may add that his article deals ably with the question of Sunday labour, and very clearly sets forth the mechanism of the office. It will be found in No. 177 of the 'Review,' or in Sir Francis Head's 'Descriptive Essays' vol. ii., p. 286.

CHAPTER VII.

EFFORTS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN POSITION. (1851–2.)

THE extent to which railway affairs had come into my hands, combined with the necessity, under existing arrangements, for my acting through the medium of others not subordinate to me, and prone to interfere with my proceedings, led me to urge upon the Postmaster-General the importance of formally transferring the secretarial management of the railway department to myself. This was the more necessary, because the circular of December, 1847, never yet recalled or superseded, made it the duty of the surveyors and others to disregard any instructions I might give in railway matters; so that I had been reluctantly compelled to ask Mr. Tilley to sign letters for me. My journal (June 26th, 1851) thus continues:—

'The Postmaster-General still hesitates—says he will consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer to-morrow, &c., and meanwhile advises me to sign instructions in disregard of the circular.'

This promise, though not eventually forgotten, produced no effect for several months. Meanwhile, I had further opportunity of perceiving how far I had recovered in public opinion the ground lost in the agitation relative to Sunday observance, being invited to Liverpool to dine on board the 'Atlantic,' one of the United States Mail Packets, with the

Commissioners and others connected with the Great Exhibition.

'*July* 12*th*.—Visited with Mr. Brown and his friends one of Cunard's ships, just starting with the American mail, and afterwards the Albert Docks, St. George's Hall, &c. Most of the foreigners were introduced to me, and all attributed to me their own Post Office improvements.

'The "Atlantic" is a splendid vessel—the dinner went off well. Cole, in returning thanks for the Executive Committee, said that the Exhibition could not have existed but for the aid of penny postage. * * * In the evening we all went to a large party given by the Mayor at the Mansion House. A great number of guests, chiefly Liverpool people, came to me to ask leave to shake hands, &c.'

In returning to town I travelled in the same carriage with three of the Foreign Commissioners—the Chevalier Lencisa, from Genoa; Signor Bartolomeo Cini, from Florence; and the Baron de Closen, of Munich. The first two knew who I was, but the last, hearing me speak of the Post Office, asked me in broken English if I knew "Hill, the father of Post Office improvement." Mr. Peabody was also my fellow-traveller, and upon my mentioning to him that I had received from Somerset House some of the stamps printed eighty years before for use in America, the first disastrous step in the policy of this country towards her transatlantic provinces, he expressed a desire for one of them, which of course I was happy to send him, and which, as I was afterwards informed, he deposited in the Museum at Washington. Such was my first and last interview with this munificent benefactor to the land of his birth and to that of his long residence.

The pleasure with which I received these acknowledgments was enhanced some months later when Chevalier Bunsen, in an official interview, spoke

strongly of the obligations of Prussia, and other continental states, towards me, for the improvements which had been effected in their internal postal arrangements.

Meanwhile my health again began to suffer. The assistance lately granted me, valuable as it was, not only fell far short of my requirements, but also came too late for full benefit. I left town for a month's holiday, and after prolonging this interval by ten days, I ventured to resume duty. Fortunately, my period of rest had been but little interrupted, and though my brother was yet new to his duties, his presence at the office not only in a measure supplied my place, but gave me assurance of information in case of serious emergency.

Meanwhile my friends were still moving in my behalf, as appears by the following letter from Mr. Cobden :—

'Midhurst, Sussex,
'14th September, 1851.

'My dear Sir,

'Having learnt your address from your brother, I write merely to say that, although I did not forget to fulfil my promise, yet the conversation I had with the Chancellor (which I took care was a casual one) ended in leaving matters where they were. He spoke as usual in terms of high regard for yourself, and is I believe sincerely desirous of promoting the object I had in view in speaking to him. But the difficulty in the way of the arrangement is the same now as before. "M. is not an old man; he cannot with decency be shelved; and at present there is nothing good enough in point of salary to which he could be transferred so as to create a vacancy in his post," &c. I confess I don't see why this should not be treated as an exceptional case, and believe that a very good defence might be made of such an arrangement as was spoken of; but I gathered from the Chancellor that he was not disposed to take upon himself the responsibility of such a proceeding. And so the matter

must remain for the present. We will talk the subject over again when we meet. * * *

'Hoping you are finding health in the sea-breezes,

'I remain,

'Very truly yours,

'R. COBDEN.'

Soon afterwards, at the request of the Postmaster-General, I visited, in company with my son, the more important towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where I discussed with Mr. Godby, the surveyor, numerous demands for postal improvement lately received from that important district. At Leeds, Halifax, Bradford, and Huddersfield I received deputations. The result of my proceedings is thus recorded :—

'*November* 19*th*.—Succeeded in every instance in satisfying the parties that we were desirous of doing all that was practicable—that some of their demands were unreasonable, or of doubtful practicability, and others dependent on the expense as compared with the correspondence to be benefited. I was exceedingly well received, thanked for the trouble I had taken, and complimented on the benefits I had conferred on the nation. I am very well satisfied with the visit, though it will cause me some months of hard work.'

Meanwhile, a little incident occurred which may perhaps be worth mentioning. A gentleman who was writing an account of the Post Office having written to Colonel Maberly to inquire as to the difference between the duties of the "secretary to the Post Office and those of the secretary to the Postmaster-General;" and Colonel Maberly having politely referred the querist to me, I wrote a brief note, the substantial part of which ran as follows :—

'There is no essential difference between the two offices, and the term "secretary to the Postmaster-General" is in strictness the official designation of both. The two secretaries

are in the same relative position to the Postmaster-General, who assigns to them their respective duties.'

Colonel Maberly, though not quite agreeing in the terms of my note, did not object to its despatch, which was accordingly made; but the querist having objected to the brevity of my reply, I referred the matter to the Postmaster-General, who settled the point by pronouncing my note "a devilish good answer."

I perceived about this time various indications of an improved feeling towards me in the office. My complete success in the trying struggle relative to Sunday observance, and in some other important matters, to be spoken of hereafter, combined with the confidence now constantly reposed in me by the Postmaster-General, and at the Treasury, seemed to have convinced opponents that further contest was unprofitable, and that it would be better frankly to enjoy the comfort of harmonious action.

'*December 26th.*—The entries in my journal have of late been comparatively few. This is not because there is less to be done, but partly because since the appointment of Frederic less has fallen to my share, and partly (indeed chiefly) because there is now much less opposition to my measures than heretofore on the part of Colonel Maberly, or indeed of any one else. The improvement in this respect is so great that, but for the apprehension that in the event of a new Postmaster-General being appointed the opposition would revive, I should scarcely desire a change in my position.'

Ground of anxiety, however, soon reappeared; strong representations being made to me as to bad appointments in the secretaries' office, the advancement of unfit men, and grievous inconvenience thence arising; a pressing reason for change which had not occurred to me.

Accordingly, about a fortnight later, I again spoke

on the subject to the Postmaster-General, who, admitting that the administration was in a very precarious state, promised to speak immediately to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which he accordingly did, but with little success, the old difficulties being still dwelt on, though the Postmaster-General now informed me that Colonel Maberly was willing to accept 1500*l.* a year as a retiring pension. I pointed out to him, moreover, that the restoration of the old gross revenue, which seemed now to be an established fact, was an epoch in the progress of my plan which afforded opportunity for decided action; a view in which he concurred.

A few days later the Postmaster-General spoke a second time to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but again with little result, save that he induced him to consent to my applying for support to my friends in Parliament. With this view, I obtained several copies of the correspondence already mentioned, and appended a memorandum, in which, after referring to past applications, and to the very small result yet obtained, I pointed out that another year had passed away, the fifth since those expectations had been held out to me which still remained to be fulfilled. I again referred to enforced delay in improvement; to insufficiency in the net revenue, owing to my inability, circumstanced as I was, to give full effect to the economical arrangements which I had always contemplated; to the comparative insignificance of the expense implied in granting to Colonel Maberly any retiring allowance that could be thought of, and to means by which even such small sacrifice could be directly compensated.

Lastly, referring to the actual position of Ministers, to the expectations held out to me, to the acknowledged fulfilment on my part of the only condition on which they were made to depend, and, above all,

to the extent to which the public service was suffering, I pressed on Government to adopt at once the only means by which it could with certainty fulfil its engagement, viz., to allow Colonel Maberly to retire on a sufficient pension; and, while admitting that such a step would be a departure from an excellent rule, pointed out that mine was an exceptional case, and must have been so viewed by Government at the time when it raised the expectations in question.

'*January* 31*st*.—Called on Cobden. Read to him the memorandum, and left a copy of the correspondence for his perusal. He enters warmly into the business, will again speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, says he ought not to hesitate; advises that I should apply to those only who, like himself, are pledged to the success of penny postage, either as members of the Committees of 1838 and 1843, or as witnesses. I think he is right; at all events, this will be the safe side. Cobden, to my surprise, said that I ought not to give up any part of my salary—that 2000*l*. a year was not too much, adding that I ought to be Postmaster-General, and would have been such in any less aristocratic country than ours. Wrote to Moffatt, who is at Ventnor, inclosing a copy, and gave a third to Thornley. Hume, Warburton and Currie are out of town.'

A few days later, however, I saw nearly all these gentlemen, as also Mr. Milner Gibson. Mr. Hume spoke of difficulties, Mr. Thornley had already spoken to the Chancellor of the Exchequer without effect, Mr. Warburton, Mr. Brown and Mr. Moffatt were as usual very much in earnest, all undertaking to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Warburton volunteering to go also to Lord John Russell whenever I might think this expedient.

'*February* 11*th*.—Brown reports that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is angry, complaining that he has had no less than four applications about me within the last two or three days, and that he can do no more. Received from Cobden the following letter.

'103, Westbourne Terrace,
'10th February, 1852.

'My dear Sir,

'Hume and I spoke to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There is a difficulty which he threw in our way (upon high authority) which you do not seem to have seen. Has Hume explained it to you? If not, give me a meeting for a minute either here or at the House. These matters are better talked about than written about.

'Yours truly,
'R. Cobden.

'R. Hill, Esq.'

The next day, on seeing Mr. Cobden, I learnt that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had pronounced my suggestion impracticable, alleging that two secretaries were necessary, and that consequently any retiring allowance to Colonel Maberly must be an additional charge on the revenue, an addition which Mr. Hume was not prepared to defend, though Mr. Cobden was. Mr. Hume subsequently confirmed this statement of his views, and while assuring me that the Chancellor of the Exchequer spoke very highly of me, and promised promotion at the first opportunity, he himself was of opinion that nothing could be done at present, and so counselled patience; forgetting that such advice to a man tottering and almost sinking under his load is much more easily given than received.

The mysterious allusion in Mr. Cobden's letter was never fully explained to me.

As the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the late conference, had assigned as a reason for Colonel Maberly's retention that the foreign negotiations were under his charge, I no sooner arrived at the office than I called upon the head clerk of that department for a specific statement on the subject, when it appeared that of all the negotiations then in hand,

eleven in number, every one, without exception, was under mine.

'*February* 13*th.*—Without committing Cobden, I put the question plainly to the Postmaster-General, as to whether he was still of opinion that in the event of Colonel Maberly's retirement I should be able to manage the department without other aid than that of the two assistant-secretaries. He answered emphatically in the affirmative, and on my adding that there was an impression on the minds of some of my friends that the appointment of another secretary would be necessary, he authorized me to state the contrary in his name, and volunteered to speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject, under the impression that my friends must have been misled by some mistake on his part.'

After reporting all this to Mr. Cobden, I called by his advice on Mr. Moffatt, who was about to speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject. Of course I put him in possession of all the facts.

'*February* 15*th.*—Met Moffatt at the Reform Club. He says the Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to hear him—that he complains bitterly of my "unfairness" in setting the Members upon him, and says that if my friends are not satisfied, they ought to meet and appoint a deputation, with which he will, once for all, go fully into the matter, but that he will not see any more individual Members. Moffatt thinks the result of his interview unfavourable, but I do not. I have all along desired to have a meeting of Members, but was afraid that it might look too much like direct agitation.'

'*February* 16*th.*—Saw Cobden, and reported proceedings. We are to do nothing for a few days, in order to allow time for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to cool.'

'*February* 17*th.*—Moffatt tells me that last night he had a conversation with the Postmaster-General, in which the latter stated that if Colonel Maberly retired the appointment of another secretary would be unnecessary.'

'*February* 18*th.*—The Postmaster-General told me of his conversation with Moffatt, adding that he has expressed a similar opinion to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.'

'*February* 19*th.*—Reported proceedings to Warburton; he will attend the meeting of Members.'

'*February* 21*st.*—Called on Cobden to advise that the meeting of Members should now be held, when I learned to my surprise (not having seen the morning papers) that Ministers resigned last night in consequence of a defeat on the Militia Bill. He considers the resignation real. I certainly have been very ill-used.'

'*February* 23*rd.*—The Postmaster-General confirms Cobden's impressions. Lord Derby has undertaken to form an administration, and Lord Clanricarde retains office only till his successor is appointed.'

I fear the deep mortification I underwent at this sudden frustration of my hopes when I thought fulfilment so near at hand caused me to regard the important change which was taking place much more from a private than a public point of view. My excuse may perhaps be found in the recollection of the struggle that I had for so many years sustained, in the fact of my worn health of both body and mind, and in the non-fulfilment of the promise originally made me, a delay by which the term of six months had already been extended to five years, and, as now appeared, till those who had given the pledge had lost the power to redeem it. On those who were now to become my official superiors I could have but little claim, and my expectation from them was even less.

It still remained to do what was possible for diminishing the evil of the change, and, as my readers will readily believe, I had full reliance on the friendliness of Lord Clanricarde. I therefore drew up a minute proposing that the restrictive regulations laid down on my entering office should be rescinded, and that the practice which had superseded them should be formally approved; and taking the minute to Lord Clanricarde's house, obtained his sanction to it.

Colonel Maberly, as his lordship soon afterwards informed me, sent in a counter-minute, but without effect. Lord Clanricarde's reply to this was admirable. While, of course, leaving matters with his successor, he gave it as his own opinion that a practice which has gradually grown up is more likely to work well than any rule that can be prescribed.

A further step on my part is thus recorded :—

'*February 27th.*—At Lord Clanricarde's request I have prepared a statement of the principal improvements which I and Frederic have effected, and of those in hand, as also a statement of the savings which we have effected. The improvements now in hand are no less than thirty in number, even counting each class, as for instance the eleven foreign negotiations, as one: the savings, omitting sums under 20*l.*, and disregarding the numerous applications for increased salaries, &c., which have been prevented, amount to nearly 60,000*l.* a year.'

This is, of course, exclusive of the large savings I effected whilst at the Treasury.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD HARDWICKE.

'*February* 28*th*.—Read Lord Derby's speech last night in the House of Lords. He talks of giving much attention to social improvements. I wish I could see reason to hope that he would go earnestly to work at the Post Office. He might, if he would, obtain a reputation for his administration in that department at least.'

'*March* 2*nd*.—Lord Hardwicke, the new Postmaster-General (whose patent, however, is not yet completed), came to the office with Lord Clanricarde. It was understood that they would go through the office together; but I afterwards found that Lord Hardwicke preferred waiting till his patent was made out, so none of us saw him. Lord Clanricarde tells me that, on his explaining to Lord Hardwicke my position in the office, and the opposition between Maberly and myself, Lord Hardwicke said the opposition was a good thing, as it would secure his hearing both sides of the question.'

'*March* 8*th*.—Lord Hardwicke entered on his duties to-day. Maberly was with him the greater part of the time he spent at the office. Before leaving, he sent a message to say that he would "have the pleasure of making my acquaintance" early next morning.'

'*March* 9*th*.—Lord Hardwicke received me in a very friendly manner, spoke in high terms of penny postage, said that he understood that all the improvements were introduced by myself, and expressed his intention to extend improvement still further, especially mentioning the complete abolition of money prepayment. He told me that Maberly had spoken to him on the importance of a division of our duties, but Lord Hardwicke said he should take no steps in the matter until he was more familiar with the subject, and that in the mean time he wished everything to proceed as before; adding

that it would be very gratifying to him if he could be the means of establishing cordiality between Maberly and myself.'

'*March* 10*th.*—Tilley came from Maberly with overtures of peace and amity. He says that Maberly is quite unhappy in consequence of the recent measures, and requested him (Tilley) to ask me if I had any objection to propose a division of duties. I replied that I should willingly consider the subject, and discuss it with Tilley or with Colonel Maberly himself, if the latter preferred my so doing, and expressed a general desire to meet his wishes as far as possible.'

On the following day I transacted business for the first time, save on a trifling matter, with my new official superior, who had informed me that he should attend the office daily and work hard. My first experience was, as will be seen, of a mixed character. It must be borne in mind that Lord Hardwicke had been accustomed to the strict discipline of a man-of-war :—

'*March* 13*th.*—Laid several important minutes before the Postmaster-General. He expressed his concurrence in all, and earnest approval of some; but, instead of signing them and returning them to me, as Lord Clanricarde would have done, he said he should keep them, and send them, when signed, with other papers, to Colonel Maberly, in order that they might be properly entered; and on my explaining that I always sent the minutes to be entered, after which they went to Colonel Maberly, the Postmaster-General intimated in rather a peremptory manner that he must do his own business in his own way.'

'*March* 18*th.*—Gave Lord Hardwicke a statement of my duties and responsibilities, he having called upon the chief officers to do the like.'

The minute examination which is, doubtless, indispensable on board a man-of-war, was less profitable in the Post Office :—

'*March* 20*th.*—We are suffering much inconvenience from the manner in which Lord Hardwicke delays his decision on the minutes: those left with him on the 13th instant are not

yet returned. He appears to be making the mistake of attempting too much. He is calling for all sorts of returns, some on unimportant matters, *e. g.*, the number of fires lighted daily in the office, and seems unwilling to rely sufficiently on the recommendations of his advisers.'

'*March* 23*rd.*—In discussing the proposed reduction in the Colonial postage, the Postmaster-General was very complimentary as to the accuracy of my financial predictions as regards former measures.'

'*March* 26*th.*—The Postmaster-General, instead of simply approving our minutes, is apt to add instructions which render the whole impracticable. I find, however, a readiness on his part to alter his minutes on their impracticability being pointed out.'

Meantime, old sources of trouble began to reopen; Colonel Maberly, in his statement of duties, representing everything except the Money Order Department as under his charge, and, in a subsequent minute, proposing in effect to place my brother and myself at certain times under the authority of the clerk in waiting. Lord Hardwicke, however, upon my pointing out this monstrous anomaly, immediately made the necessary rectification.

A conversation ensuing relative to the division of duties, he again expressed a desire to place matters on a more satisfactory footing, but appeared to have a notion that Colonel Maberly's authority must be in some degree superior to mine. "There cannot," said he, "be two kings in Brentford;" and on my pointing out that in the Treasury and other departments there were two secretaries of equal authority, he replied, "If you are to be joint secretaries, I'll make you shake hands and sit in the same room."

How far harmony would have been improved by compulsory association I am not able to determine, as the experiment was never tried. The conversation continued as follows:—

'He again spoke in strong terms of the value of my services,

and proceeded in so open and unreserved a manner that I thought it best to tell him of the conditions under which I accepted office, and of the manner in which the late Government had from time to time postponed the fulfilment of its engagements. My statement produced an evident effect on Lord Hardwicke. He said he was very glad I had communicated these facts to him; that he should consider what I had said confidential, though he should probably speak to Lord Derby on the subject.'

I had the more hope of his intercession in my favour because I found that he was intimate with Mr. Warburton, of whom he spoke in the highest possible terms; and my hope was further strengthened by a report from his private secretary that his lordship had spoken very highly of me, and seemed inclined to place his main reliance on my advice.

The hope, however, was soon crushed :—

'*April* 13*th.*—Warburton came into my room before seeing the Postmaster-General [the appointment had been made by me with his lordship's sanction], but, as he thought it better not to come up again, I arranged to call upon him in the evening, when I found that, although the Postmaster-General had spoken well of me, Warburton has no hope whatever of his adopting any more decided course than a division of duties between Maberly and myself; so that chance is gone. The Postmaster-General told Warburton that Maberly had led him to expect that I should be troublesome and unmanageable, but that he had not found me so. I have reason to believe that similar misrepresentations were made to Mr. Baring, Lord Lowther, and Lord Clanricarde in turn.'

I may add that from Lord Canning (Lord Hardwicke's successor) I received distinct information as to such proceeding in relation to himself.

Nevertheless, I had shortly afterwards further evidence of Lord Hardwicke's friendly disposition towards me :—

'*April* 29*th.*—Present at the Countess of Hardwicke's assembly. Received in the most friendly manner. It is curious that the first invitation of the kind should be from a Tory.'

I may seem here to overlook Mr. Baring's repeated hospitality. This, however, was not only somewhat different in kind, but also was experienced many years before, when I was at the Treasury.

'*May 3rd.*—The Postmaster-General has sent me a minute referring to my statement of the work in hand, and requesting that I will not enter on any new subject without his previous direction. As he was then at the office, I immediately applied to him for an explanation, when I found that he had sent a similar minute to Maberly, and that his object was to secure that he should at all times know what was going on. He says (all in good temper) that hitherto I have really been Postmaster-General, but that he intends to be Postmaster-General himself; adding, however, that he has no intention of obstructing improvement. His notion was that it would be practicable for me to apply for the authority in question, even before entering on the preliminary investigation of the subject, but I satisfied him that this was impossible; and the understanding now is that I am to make the requisite application as early as possible. * * * In the course of an interview a good deal of plain speaking occurred in a half-joking manner. Among other things, I told him that, if he obstructed improvements, I should leave him.'

If I had had any misgiving as to the manner in which my plain speaking had been received, it could scarcely have outlived the following:—

'*May 4th.*—The Postmaster-General has sent Maberly and myself the following, which came written on a large sheet of paper like a minute:

'*To Celebrate the Queen's Birthday.*

'The Master-General of the Post Office requests the honour of Colonel Maberly's and Mr. Rowland Hill's company at dinner on the 13th of May, at a quarter before eight o'clock.
'Full dress.'

It was curious that this act of politeness should be followed immediately by an act of discipline. The

one, however, made me more ready to acquiesce in the other :—

'The same hour which brought this good-natured invitation brought also a demand for my latch-key of the private door. The Postmaster-General has given up his own latch-key, and has required every one else to do the same. I am not sure that this is not a necessary precaution.'

Be this as it may, the safeguard was not long maintained, the latch-keys being quietly redistributed in the interregnum that followed Lord Hardwicke's retirement, and never afterwards reclaimed.

The necessity for my appearing at Lord Hardwicke's party in court dress led to a discovery, which, though somewhat annoying at the time, I can afford to laugh at now.

Calling for correspondence which had taken place three or four years before with the Lord Chamberlain, and which, as I understood, for I had never seen the papers, regulated my official costume, I found that, while Colonel Maberly was placed in the third, I had been assigned to the fifth or lowest class, the Secretaries for Ireland and Scotland, my acknowledged inferiors in position, being placed in the fourth.

I had no difficulty in deciding on the authorship of this arrangement, nor in conjecturing why, contrary to rule, the papers had been withheld. On my calling the Postmaster-General's attention to the matter, he took it up warmly, expressing an opinion that I should be placed in the same class with Colonel Maberly, and directing me to prepare a minute accordingly, though, as formalities had to be gone through, the change could not be made in time for the dinner.

I suppose, however, Lord Hardwicke must have forgotten the matter. My own attention was soon

absorbed in things of more importance, no second occasion recalling it to the point; and, in fact, nothing was done until rectification took place mechanically on my promotion to the sole secretaryship.

The dinner took place as appointed, on the 13th, and the curious may find a list of the guests in the *Morning Post* of the following day. I could not but admire, however, the discreet arrangement made by our host to prevent jealousy between Colonel Maberly and me, the former being placed at one end of the table, the latter at the other, while his lordship sat precisely in the middle.

To return to ordinary matters. Certainly my Post Office experience had never yet long run smooth, and the ripple soon came :—

'*June* 10*th*.—In a minute of Saturday last, on the Prussian treaty, which, I hope, is now finally settled, I mentioned, as I had done in former minutes, that I had seen Chevalier Bunsen on a point of difference. In confirming the minute, the Postmaster-General made an exception as regards my seeing Chevalier Bunsen, adding a direction that, in future, when any foreign minister came to the Post Office, he, the Postmaster-General, should be informed, with a view, as afterwards explained, of seeing the minister himself. Even if necessary—which it was not—neither the time, just as I had satisfactorily concluded a very difficult treaty, nor the manner, was well chosen. To-day, on inquiring how the Postmaster-General wished me to proceed when he was absent from the office, viz., whether I should delay the business or transact it myself, and report proceedings on his arrival, he expressed a desire that I should, in his absence, inform the "Chief Secretary," meaning Colonel Maberly, of the minister's visit, so as to give him the option of the interview; an instruction which was particularly absurd, seeing that the very negotiation in question had been transferred to me [from Colonel Maberly]. * * * To this I replied that I should, of course, follow the Postmaster-General's instructions as regards communicating with himself, but that I must decline informing Colonel Maberly, as my doing so would be

equivalent to an acknowledgment of subordination to the latter. On this the Postmaster-General declared an intention of writing a minute making my position really subordinate to Colonel Maberly's, again using his favourite expression, "there cannot be two kings in Brentford"—that there must be a first authority, a second, and a third; that to have two equal authorities was contrary to his views of discipline, &c., &c. I acquiesced in the general proposition, but reminded him of Lord Clanricarde's opinion, that it was desirable Colonel Maberly should be induced to retire; adding that, during the last few years Lord Clanricarde was in office, I was in effect the Chief Secretary; and cautiously suggesting that, if Colonel Maberly were retained, and it was necessary to place one above the other, the proper course would be to ascertain which of us was best qualified for the superior appointment, and to act accordingly. I said also that there would be no great difficulty in deciding the question of superiority, for that he would find, on referring to the minutes, that Lord Clanricarde was in the habit of requiring my opinion in nearly all Colonel Maberly's difficult cases; and when, as frequently happened, we advised differently, in nine instances out of ten my advice was adopted, and Colonel Maberly's rejected. As all this seemed to produce little effect, I proposed to defer the question for the present, and proceeded with the other business.'

Among the minutes which I submitted to him was one which, after reading it, he pronounced a "most masterly statement," declaring his intention to act in accordance with its recommendation, and praising the minute on various grounds.

My journal thus continues :—

'On finding that he was so much delighted with it, I reverted to our conversation as to my position. * * * This appeared to take him aback, and he replied, "Well, well, I must write my minute; but I don't think I shall make you subordinate to Colonel Maberly, though I must have a difference. I don't think you'll object to what I intend; and, if you should, I shan't be at all offended by your appealing to the First Lord of the Treasury."'

The minute, accordingly, appeared in a very mitigated form, so that the main objection left in it was to the persistent designation of Colonel Maberly as Chief Secretary, a title unknown in the office, authorized by no warrant or other document, and sure to lead to further trouble.

These proceedings led me into several conferences with my brothers, which, however, ended in a determination to do nothing, the conclusion being that further attempts would be useless, and very probably injurious.

I need not say that we scanned the political horizon at this time with great interest :—

'*July 26th.*—Circumstanced as I am, I have, of course, anxiously watched the elections, now nearly completed. I fear the result is such as to enable Ministers to retain their places for some time.'

Of course, the restrictions laid upon me by the Postmaster-General greatly lessened my work—a relief with which I might have been well pleased, could I have been satisfied as to consequences. The new distribution of duties, however, was ill-judged; and, though partly corrected on my representation, remained seriously obstructive to improvement. By fits, too, the work was heavy, and at such times the injury done to my health by past labour and anxiety was too apt to show itself.

My forebodings as to the result of the elections were not confirmed :—

'*November 23rd.*—The Postmaster-General has decided to defer for the present the whole question of Colonial postage. He talked openly to me of a doubt of the Ministry continuing in office.'

'*December 15th.*—The Postmaster-General tells me that it is very probable that the Ministry will be thrown out by the division on the Budget, and spoke of the views of the Govern-

ment in so unreserved a manner, that I thought it right to remind him that my political views and connections were those of the opposite party. He said he knew that very well but still went on to speak of the views, expectations, and intentions of the Cabinet.'

'*December* 17*th*.—The division last night was against the Ministers. Brotherton, who has just called at the office, tells me that they will certainly resign to-day.'

'*December* 20*th*.—The Postmaster-General has appointed a hot Orange partizan of the present Government (not previously in the service) to succeed Creagh (recently dead) as President of the Dublin Money Order Office. I know, from what he has told me, that he has done this unwillingly, being, I suspect, pressed thereto by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Cornwall and I had recommended the next in seniority, who happens to be a good man. Notwithstanding this, and one or two other cases, Lord Hardwicke has, on the whole, used his patronage well.'

I must, in fairness, add that the gentleman whose appointment seemed at the time so objectionable proved a very good officer.

At this time of doubt as to who might be my new official superior, and what the position I might hold with him, I perused with great satisfaction an important document just issued :—

'*December* 28*th*.—The Report on the East Indian Post Office contains, among other matters, the following testimony in favour of uniformity of rate. It is curious to contrast the evidence of the officials there and here on the question, especially when the greater distances and inferior means of conveyance in our Indian Empire are considered.

'" 34. Uniformity of postage, without reference to distance, is recommended by its simplicity, by its fairness, and by the facilities it gives for the introduction of other improvements into the department. Combined with a low rate of charge, it forms the conspicuous and chief benefit, which the monopoly of the carriage of letters enables the Government to confer upon the whole body of its subjects, by almost annihilating distance, and placing it within the power of every individual to communicate freely with all parts of the empire. It makes

the Post Office what under any other system it can never be —the unrestricted means of diffusing knowledge, extending commerce, and promoting in every way the social and intellectual improvement of the people. It is no longer an experiment, having been introduced with eminent success into the United Kingdom, as well as into the United States of America, France, Spain, and Russia. It is advocated by every officer of experience connected with the department in India, and by every individual who has been consulted in the course of this inquiry, and it has already been recommended by three out of the four subordinate Governments."'

I may add that the recommendation of the Commission was soon afterwards carried into effect; so that, with the exception of some outlying portions, a low uniform rate of postage was established over the length and breadth of our vast Indian Empire.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD CANNING. (1853–4.)

THE doubt as to the new Postmaster-General was soon satisfactorily cleared, Lord Canning being appointed; and though it was not until a fortnight later that I had an opportunity of forming a direct opinion of our new chief, I had heard enough to make me very hopeful as to my future relations with him.

Meantime, I had the satisfaction to find that I had lost no ground at the Treasury, Mr. Wilson, the new secretary, having written to ask for my advice and opinion on the several cases awaiting decision.

'*January* 14*th*.—My interview with Lord Canning was satisfactory. * * * I intended to have abstained at this, my first interview, from all allusions to the disagreeables of my position; but he entered himself on the subject, and, in the course of a long conversation, I told him of the expectations, still unfulfilled, held out by Sir Charles Wood and Lord Clanricarde; of my successful administration of the Money Order Office; of the division of duties, which had gradually grown up under Lord Clanricarde; and of the new arrangements made by Lord Hardwicke, &c. I found that, * * * as was the case with Lord Hardwicke when he entered office, he had been led to believe that I and Frederic did nothing but manage the Money Order Office. At the close of an

hour and a half's conversation, Lord C. expressed a desire that Lord Hardwicke's arrangements should be observed till he (Lord C.) was more familiar with the business of the office, when he would revise them.'

Of course, at this juncture, every confirmation of my former calculations and predictions was highly acceptable, and particularly welcome was a return just then received, showing that the number of letters had at length attained that five-fold increase on which I had originally counted, progress of late having been very rapid.

I soon had the satisfaction to find that I was treated with confidence, Lord Canning consulting me on various matters which his predecessor had withdrawn from my charge; and though zealous friends were spontaneously moving to obtain my promotion to the sole secretaryship, I soon saw reason to hope that extraneous assistance would not be required. Lord Canning, indeed, soon afterwards voluntarily entered upon the subject of my position, promised to speak upon it with Lord Clanricarde, and probably with Sir Charles Wood, and applied to me for a copy of the correspondence which had passed.

An entry in my journal (March 22nd) shows that new reasons arose for desiring that the change, deferred so long, should not be further postponed, one being, that the important improvements in rural posts had been almost entirely suspended. The Postmaster-General, however, was not inclined to let my interests flag.

I saw also fresh evidence of confidence in me at the Treasury :—

'*April 8th.*—Mr. John Wood, by direction of the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Mr. Gladstone], consulted me confidentially on some points of the intended Budget. * * * I inquired if I was at liberty to name the subject to the Postmaster-

General, but was told, to my surprise, that I was not at liberty so to do.'

Not malapropos to the present question I discovered that a serious obstacle to improvement in our treaty with France had arisen from a concession heedlessly made to the French Post Office about two years before, increasing the undue advantages already spoken of; a concession made, not only without my knowledge, but, improbable as this may appear, without authority from the Treasury.

Although, however, the direct loss produced by this blunder was at the rate of more than 3000*l.* a year, the old punctilious notions as to ostensible economy still stood in the way of the change by which alone real economy could be obtained, the Postmaster-General informing me that, though he was ready to listen to any suggestions for facilitating the desired change, he feared Mr. Gladstone would object to the expedient of a full retiring allowance to Colonel Maberly on the same grounds that Sir Charles Wood had done.

During the next six weeks the Postmaster-General held other conversations with me, but had no progress to report. On the 7th of June, however, he advised me to prepare a statement for his use at the Treasury; but upon my speaking of the Parliamentary influence which I could bring to bear upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he deprecated its present use, promising at the same time to inform the Chancellor as to the fact.

One important article in the statement called for related of course to economy, and I had the pleasure to find, upon examination, that the amount of saving, either actually obtained or prospectively secured by my brother and myself, within the last sixteen months, was nearly 75,000*l.* per annum, which, added to nearly 60,000*l.* per annum previously economised

since my return to office, gave a total annual saving of nearly 135,000*l.*, effected in the face of constant opposition, amidst divided authority, and with command of only a most inadequate force.

'*June* 18*th.*—Sent in my letter to the Postmaster-General. * * * After very carefully considering the question, * * * I have intimated as plainly as I could, without a risk of offence, my intention not to remain at the Post Office if present arrangements are continued.'

The following shows the substance of the letter, which, however, is given at full length in the Appendix (H.).

I gave in the outset, Lord Canning being as yet new to the matter, a concise history of my proceedings from the time of my dismissal in 1842, mentioning my invitation to office in 1846, my stipulation as to assurance of sufficient authority, the promises given me on this point and the expectation of speedy promotion held out, my own reluctance to accede to office without a more material guaranty, and my concession to the opinion of my friends, in particular Mr. Warburton, Lord Overstone, Mr. Hawes, and Mr. Raikes Currie. After observing that even Lord Clanricarde's kindness and confidence had failed to counteract the radical badness of the arrangement, I proceeded as follows :—

'Looking then back upon the events of the six years during which my promised promotion has been delayed, I feel bound to state that, if in December, 1846, I could have foreseen what has occurred, I could not have accepted the offer then made, nor do I believe that under like circumstances my friends would have advised me to the step.'

After speaking of the improvements effected by my brother and myself in the Money Order Department, and showing that this success established the probability of improvement under the same manage-

ment, in the Post Office generally, I mentioned that owing to the rapid augmentation in the number of letters, no doubt was entertained in the department that in a short time a most expensive outlay, probably not less than half a million, would be required for a new post office, a necessity which I did not doubt might, under better arrangements, be averted for years if not removed altogether; supporting such expectation by the fact that under the management of my brother and myself a similar and yet more pressing necessity had been so averted in the Money Order Department. I likewise pointed out that, even supposing a new building to be afterwards necessary, it was important that its erection should be delayed until the carrying of the railway system into the heart of the Metropolis should have shown what site and what arrangements would best suit the altered state of things; observing also, that from overtures made to the department by some of the projectors, I thought it highly probable that whatever changes in the Post Office might be rendered necessary or desirable by the new state of things, they would not have to be made altogether, perhaps not mainly, at the cost of Government.

After referring to the almost clamorous demand for further facilities in the transmission of letters, a demand which could not be effectually met without energetic and cordial co-operation in the higher departments of the Executive, and ready obedience and zealous activity in all the subordinates, I concluded as follows :—

'Having written thus far, and having also carefully considered every statement and every remark I have made, I feel it my duty to say that, after all the deliberation required by so grave a question, I have arrived at the settled conviction that the existing state of things cannot continue ; and I therefore respectfully request that in considering the present

application such continuance may not be regarded as a possible alternative.

'I am sure your lordship will believe me incapable of dealing lightly with that connection with the Post Office on which I set so great and just a value: to devise and bring into operation, so far as it has been effected, my system of Penny Postage, has been the cherished object of the best years of my life; interest in its progress, whether I am an instrument or not in promoting it, will ever retain the firmest hold on my mind, and would suffice to keep me in any course but one which I feel to be inconsistent alike with my private and my public duty.'

* * * * *

The whole correspondence relative to my position having been submitted by Lord Canning to Mr. Gladstone, who, in turn, as I was informed, consulted the Premier, Lord Aberdeen, I again encountered delay, though now qualified with the important assurance that, in order to facilitate the desired change, Mr. Gladstone would arrest certain economical measures which had been decided on, and to which he attached great importance. The vacancy in prospect was that of the Chairmanship of the Audit Office (spoken of long ago by Lord Clanricarde), but no exact information existed as to the intentions of the incumbent, Sir William Herries. Lord Canning, however, undertook to inquire.

A fortnight later I was informed by the Postmaster-General that Sir William Herries was believed to be willing to resign. The Postmaster-General expected to learn more on the following day; and he soon afterwards informed me that, according to information received from Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Herries had some time before proposed to retire if Government would give him a regiment; but, upon a cavalry regiment being offered, had preferred to wait for one of infantry. Upon my inquiring whether I might understand that Government would

take the first opportunity of giving Colonel Maberly another appointment, Lord Canning, after reminding me of the sacrifice already made to that end, added that Mr. Gladstone had expressed an opinion to the effect, that if, by so doing, he should succeed in retaining my services, he should most effectually consult the interests of the Government and the expectations of the public. Of course I expressed my gratification at so high a compliment. I still, however, pressed for a definite answer to my question, and finally, the Postmaster-General promised again to consult the higher authorities, and to write me an answer to my letter. He added, that he should show the draft of his letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and probably to Lord Aberdeen.

'*August* 10*th*.—Received the following letter from Lord Canning:—

'Grosvenor Square,
'August 9th, 1853.

'My dear Sir,

'I have laid your letter of the 18th of June before Lord Aberdeen and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who have given it their attentive consideration.

'The change of your official position which is urged in it depends upon matters not altogether in the control of the Government; and, although I am enabled to say that upon a fitting opportunity arising it is probable that an offer would be made by the Government to use Colonel Maberly's services in another department, I have no knowledge whatever of Colonel Maberly's wishes or intentions in regard to his own position, nor do I feel it necessary at present to inquire into them.

'I trust that you will not be disappointed if I am unable to give any further or more positive reply to your request.

'I return the copy of the "confidential correspondence" which I received from you, and which has since been seen by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'I am, my dear Sir,
'Yours very faithfully,
'Canning.

'Rowland Hill, Esq.,
'&c., &c., &c.'

I was much disappointed; for with every allowance for official caution, the letter promised but little, and seemed to imply that, even if a fit opportunity should occur, there was no intention of *requiring* Colonel Maberly to give up his present appointment. If any one regards my distrust as unwarrantable, I think he will find excuse in considering the numberless disappointments I had already sustained.

'*August* 16*th.*—Placed the subjoined letter in the hands of the Postmaster-General. Explained verbally the danger to my health, and even life, of continuing the present arrangements, described my sufferings from a tendency of blood to the head, * * * and suggested his seeing Hodgson* on the subject. I told him that my object was to satisfy him of the real difficulties of the case, and that in saying I *could* not go on as at present, I did not mean that I *would* not. I think the communication will have its effect.'

In this letter, after having thanked the Postmaster-General for what he had so kindly done in my behalf, I repeated the request so often made at an earlier period, that until the only effectual change could be made I might at least have such support to my authority as would arise from my being placed on perfect equality in all respects with my colleague, and further have definitely assigned to me such departments of the secretarial duty as his lordship might judge proper, together with a transfer to my authority of the corresponding portions of the secretarial staff.

An alternative expedient which I suggested was that I should suspend my present duties, and employ the interval in personally inspecting the postal arrangements of foreign countries, and in negotiating, under his lordship's instructions, such changes as might appear best calculated to facilitate our foreign postal communications.

* The late Mr. Joseph Hodgson sometime President of the Royal College of Surgeons; for nearly fifty years my medical adviser, and likewise my valued and intimate friend.

Three days later I spoke again to the Postmaster-General, pointing out that, by the death of Sir Frederick Adam, there was a vacant colonelcy. He was aware of the fact, but thought he could not move in the matter.

In this posture of affairs, having first arranged with Mr. Hodgson for a letter to the Postmaster-General, which the latter had expressed his willingness to receive, I left town for a holiday, and, accompanied by my wife and two of my daughters, passed a month in Scotland; my rest, however, being somewhat interfered with by demands upon my attention from Glasgow and Greenock, the latter place having a real grievance which I took immediate steps to remedy. At Dunoon the inhabitants presented me with a complimentary address, and in various ways paid us many gratifying attentions. The interruption to my holiday was comparatively small, and we all enjoyed the excursion very much.

'*October* 13*th*.—The Postmaster-General came to the office for the first time since his holiday and mine commenced. * * * He entered on the subject of my letter of the 16th August. He told me that he had received Mr. Hodgson's letter; that immediately on his return to town he saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject, and had, with some reluctance, called also on the Commander-in-Chief (here he noted the fact, of which I was aware, that three vacant colonelcies had arisen); that he was not at liberty to state what had passed at the interview, but that it had satisfied him of the high probability that, in a few months, if not weeks, Government would be able to offer Colonel Maberly the appointment of Chairman of the Board of Audit; and that though he must be understood as not pledging himself that such would be the case, and still less that Colonel M. would accept the offer if made, he had made up his mind to advise me to wait. Incidentally, he named Christmas as the probable maximum time. He added that he thought there would be great difficulty in adopting either of the temporary expedients suggested in my letter of the 16th August, more especially

the first, and that he hoped to obviate the necessity altogether. After urging the unfairness of making my position contingent on Colonel M.'s decision, and suggesting the immediate adoption of the first alternative in my letter, which, while perfectly fair, would probably make Colonel M. the more ready to accept the offer, I inquired whether, in the event of his refusing, the Postmaster-General would be prepared then to adopt such alternative; to which he replied that he certainly should; but that he had reason to believe that the offer would not be refused, accompanied, as it would be, with such addition to the salary attached to the office as may be required to make up the amount Colonel M. now receives. In conclusion, I thanked the Postmaster-General, and promised carefully to consider his advice.'

The period of suspense which followed the above communication was agreeably broken by the visit of the Treasury Commission already mentioned, which came to inquire into Post Office salaries, &c. The Commissioners were Lord Elcho, Sir Stafford Northcote, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and Mr. Hoffay.

My journal thus describes the mode of my examination :—

'*December 2nd.*—The Commissioners concluded my evidence. * * * Matters are conducted in a very pleasant, though discursive, manner. As regards myself, it has been rather a conversation or discussion (as though I were a member of the Commission) than an examination.'

Of the results of the investigation I shall speak under the head "Salaries."

The opening of the year 1854 still found me in the same position, though, certainly, with a better defined prospect than ever before, since, not only the promise of promotion had been renewed, but also the contingencies on which its fulfilment depended distinctly pointed out. I had now, however, completed the seventh year of my service at the Post Office, and, perhaps, I may be excused if, in comparing fulfilment with expectations held out, I thought seven years a

rather free interpretation of six months. Still, being convinced that the Postmaster-General was as earnest in my favour as even Lord Clanricarde had been, and also that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and even the Premier were sincerely desirous of speedily effecting the proposed change, I could afford to wait a little, though my health would not admit of a long delay. Fortunately, encouraging information soon came.

'*January 6th,* 1854.—The Postmaster-General entered on the subject of my position at the Post Office. Showed me a letter from Lord Hardinge, to which he, no doubt, referred on the 13th of October; it is dated in August. Lord H. states that, at the usual rate of mortality among colonels, Sir William Herries' turn would occur before the end of January.'

'*January 16th.*—Dined at Lord Canning's; a pleasant small party. I sat next to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with whom I had much agreeable conversation.'

It is not recorded in my journal, but I distinctly remember that I returned home with the impression that I had been all the time upon my trial (in a most friendly spirit, however), first, before the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and afterwards, though the notion may seem ridiculous, before Lady Canning, my host having very perceptibly led me into conversation with this highly-accomplished lady; and she having, with no little tact and much kindness, drawn me out. I remember reporting to my wife that I had been fairly pumped; adding, however, that I thought I had not suffered under the operation; and indeed had I but been in even my former health the remaining interval of expectation would have seemed short.

'*February 25th.*—Went to Brighton for a little rest. The harass and hard work so much increased of late by railway irregularities, and by the apparently never-ending delay as to my position in the office, have made me seriously unwell.'

Matters, however, were now steadily advancing towards a conclusion :—

'*March 2nd.*—Had some further talk with the Postmaster-General on the subject of my position. The recent death of Colonel Hay caused him again to see Lord Hardinge. The next vacancy is to be offered to Sir William Herries.'

It must be admitted that waiting for dead men's shoes has but little tendency to promote kindly sympathy, and I fear my family, in consulting the military obituary about this time, were not so much impressed as might be desired with the loss sustained by the country in the death of its veterans. The desired information, however, did not come in the expected form.

'*April 8th.*—Somewhat startled with the announcement in the newspapers that Sir William Herries had resigned his appointment as Chairman of the Audit Office. But the Postmaster-General tells me that this is a necessary preliminary to his being nominated to a colonelcy now vacant; that he (the Postmaster-General) has seen Lord Aberdeen respecting Sir William Herries' successor, and that "all is right."'

A week later I was again taken by surprise, not unmingled with alarm :—

'*April 15th.*—Yesterday the "Daily News" announced that Mr. Edward Romilly had been appointed to succeed Sir William Herries. This I concluded was a mistake; but this morning a similar announcement appearing in the "Morning Chronicle," I sent a note of inquiry to the Postmaster-General, and received by return of messenger a note as follows:—"Dear Mr. Hill,—The announcement in the 'Chronicle' is true, but the fact in nowise affects any arrangements respecting yourself. Yours, very faithfully, CANNING." Later in the day the Postmaster-General came to the office and explained that the Government was unwilling to place a new man at the head of the office; they had, therefore, promoted Mr. Romilly, one of the previous Commissioners, and that Colonel Maberly was to take Mr. R.'s place; that he had consented

so to do, and that the whole thing was settled. * * * The Postmaster-General added that the whole scheme was near being knocked on the head a few days ago by the breaking-up of the Ministry on the question of postponing the Reform Bill; for twelve hours they had in effect resigned.'

Notwithstanding the announcement that "the whole thing was settled," it may well be supposed that, after receiving the last part of Lord Canning's communication, I retained some little suppressed anxiety until the necessary forms should be completed; for this, however, ten days sufficed.

'*April 25th.*—The following letter was this morning received from the Treasury:

Treasury Chambers,
24th April, 1854.

My Lord,

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to transmit for your information and guidance a copy of their lordships' minute of the 21st instant, appointing Lieut.-Colonel Maberly to a seat at the Board of Audit, and consolidating the appointments of Secretary to the General Post Office and Secretary to the Postmaster-General in the person of Mr. Rowland Hill.

I am, &c.,
C. E. Trevelyan.

The Right Honourable
The Postmaster-General,
&c., &c. &c.

'Addressed the following letter to the Postmaster-General:—

G. P. O., 25th April, 1854.

My dear Lord,

Allow me to tender my sincere and earnest thanks for the change which has been effected in my position—a change for which I feel the more indebted because of the persevering kindness with which, in the midst of your own laborious duties, you have wrought for it from the moment of my earliest application to you on the subject, and with which I feel the more deeply gratified because it affords a promise of seeing those improvements which have been the main

object of my life brought to completion under your lordship's enlightened administration.

I have the honour to remain,
Your Lordship's obliged and
Faithful servant,
ROWLAND HILL.

The Right Honourable
VISCOUNT CANNING,
&c., &c., &c.

I also wrote letters of thanks to Mr. Gladstone and Lord Aberdeen, as well as to the various friends to whom I was chiefly indebted for efforts in my behalf.

Letters of congratulation soon poured in from all sides; first from my own family, as being first informed, and then from the many friends in and out of Parliament, at home and abroad, who had so long and so steadily supported the cause of postal reform, and so kindly interested themselves in my favour; amongst others, from Lord Brougham, Lord Truro, Sir Francis Baring, Mr. Warburton, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Hume, Mr. Moffatt, Mr. Raikes Currie, and M. Piron.

Government went further even than I had ever asked for, advancing my salary at once to the maximum rate of 2000*l.* a year.

It will be observed that all those to whom I had on this occasion to render official thanks had been members of the government by which twelve years before I had been dismissed from office. I could not but think that the kind and earnest manner in which these gentlemen now acted proceeded in some measure from a desire to compensate me for the injustice of their former leader; and this view made me even more grateful for their consideration.

The following is my concluding entry on the subject:—

'*May 9th.*—Last night the Chancellor of the Exchequer * * * spoke of my appointment, and took the opportunity of complimenting both Maberly and myself.

'I gladly part with Colonel Maberly by recording the compliment paid to him by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and though I am satisfied that I have always done him justice—at least have always desired so to do—I am glad to be relieved from the necessity of continuing records which I cannot but feel would, should this journal ever be read, from their constant repetition, produce no very favourable impression regarding myself. I can only say that if I know myself I am neither suspicious nor querulous, and that in making these records I have discharged a disagreeable task from a feeling that it was necessary as a means towards Colonel M.'s removal (a step essential to the completion of penny postage), and as a justification of my own proceedings in connection with such removal.'

Perhaps, however, I should not omit the following, as by so doing I might offend the lady members of my family, whilst with other readers its brevity may secure pardon for its insertion:—

'*June 9th.*—Presented at Court by Lord Canning on my being appointed secretary.'

CHAPTER X.

PROGRESS OF REFORM FROM THE MIDDLE OF 1851 TO THE END OF 1854.

HAVING thus conducted the narrative to that point in my official career to which my hopes and expectations had so long been directed, I now pause again to speak of concurrent events, and particularly to mention the improvements effected during the three years of which I have been treating. I shall, as before, deal separately with the several departments of Post Office administration.

I must add that, for the sake of convenience, I have in several departments continued the narrative somewhat beyond the period of my appointment as sole secretary, viz., April, 1854, trenching even in one or two cases on the year 1855.

MONEY ORDER DEPARTMENT.

The secretarial charge of this department had been committed, as will perhaps be remembered, to my brother Frederic. I cannot better describe the state to which it had by this time been brought than by quoting the following passages from an interesting and amusing article in 'Household Words.'* The whole article may still be perused with pleasure and profit:—

'In 1792, when the true British sailor was stoutly preparing to defy the French in various parts of the globe at thirty shillings a month, and when British military valour was fighting Tippoo Saib in India at a shilling a day, it was

* Vol. v. p. 1, March 20, 1852.

felt as a great hardship that the affluent warriors of both services could not transmit, safely and speedily, to their sweethearts and wives, even from one part of the United Kingdom to another, their surplus capital. The Government, seeing the danger of allowing the savings of its servants to burn holes in their pockets, was good enough to concoct a snug little "job," by means of which such pocket-conflagrations might be extinguished. The monopoly of transmitting money from one place to another was conceded to three gentlemen in connection with the Post Office. Their terms were—eightpence for every pound; but if the sum exceeded two pounds, a stamp duty of one shilling was levied by Government in addition. Five guineas was the highest amount which could be thus remitted; and the charge for that sum was four shillings and sixpence, or nearly five per cent., besides the price of the postage of the letter which contained the advice—perhaps a shilling more.

'Now, happily, the days of monopoly have passed, and Mr. Rowland Hill does the same thing for the odd sixpence, with an odd penny, at a profit to the Government of about seven thousand pounds a year, exclusive of the gain derived from the enormous number of letters of advice which Post Office orders have created. When the privilege was extended from soldiers and sailors to the general public, the three monopolists of the last century could divide between them, on an average, no more than six hundred and fifty pounds per annum. No longer ago than the year 1838, the Money Order Office was absorbed into the Post Office; and, although the charges were reduced to a commission of sixpence for sums not exceeding two pounds, and of one shilling and sixpence for sums up to five pounds (which was, and is still the limit), a chief clerk and two assistants were appointed to do all the business the public brought to them; and even they could only do it at a loss to the department. People could not afford to increase even the reduced charges for commission, by the eightpenny and shilling postages, for their letters of advice.

'Penny postage, therefore, is the parent of the gigantic money-order system, which now flourishes in full activity. In estimating the advantages of that great stroke of economical, administrative, and commercial sense, many of its less prominent agencies for good are overlooked. The facili-

ties it has afforded for epistolary intercommunication are so wonderful and self-evident, that we who benefit by them are blinded to the hidden impulses it has given to social improvement and to commerce. Regarded only as the origin of the present money-order system, penny postage has occasioned the exercise of prudence, benevolence, and self-denial; it has, in many instances, stopped the sufferings of want by timely remittances; and it has quickened the undercurrents of trade by causing small transactions to be easily and promptly effected. These advantages can only be estimated by a consideration of the following facts.

'During the advent year of penny postage, the commission on Post Office orders was reduced to threepence and sixpence for sums not exceeding two pounds and not exceeding five pounds respectively. In that year the number of orders granted in the United Kingdom was (in round numbers, which we shall use throughout, for the reader's greater convenience) 188,000, for an aggregate amount of 313,000*l.* Even this was a great advance on the business previously done at the old prices; but what are the figures for the tenth year of penny postage? During the year 1850 the number of orders granted in the United Kingdom was 4,440,000, for amounts making up 8,495,000*l.*; only a million less than the yearly produce of the income and assessed taxes put together! This marvellous increase can perhaps be better appreciated by being seen through a diminished medium. In the first *month* of the penny postage (1840), the issue of orders was about 10,000 in number, for something over 16,000*l.*; but in the month of December, 1851, the number of orders issued was more than 367,000, for 690,000*l.* That is to say, during that single month twice as many orders were taken out and paid for than were issued and paid in 1840 during the whole year.

* * * * * *

'The Central Money Order Office in which these remarkable results have been produced and ascertained is in Aldersgate Street, London, hard by the Post Office. It is a large establishment—large enough to be a very considerable Post Office in itself—with extensive cellarage branching off into interminable groves of letters of advice and receipts, all methodically arranged for reference. The room in which the orders are issued and paid has a flavour of Lombard Street

and money. It has its long banker's counter, where clerks sit behind iron gratings, with their wooden bowls of cash, and their little scales for weighing gold; and vistas of pigeon-holes stretch out behind them—which are not without their pigeons, as we shall presently see. Here, from ten o'clock to four, keeping the swing doors on the swing all day, all sorts and conditions of people come and go. Greasy butchers and salesmen from Newgate Market, with bits of suet in their hair, who loll, and lounge, and cool their foreheads against the grating, like a good-humoured sort of bears; sharp little clerks not long from school, who have everything requisite and necessary in readiness; older clerks in shooting coats, a little sobered down as to official zeal, though possibly not yet as to cigar divans and betting offices; matrons who *will* go distractedly wrong, and whom no consideration, human or divine, will induce to declare in plain words what they have come for; people with small children, which they perch on edges of remote desks, where the children, supposing themselves to be for ever abandoned and lost, present a piteous spectacle; labouring men, merchants, half-pay officers, retired old gentlemen from trim gardens by the New River, excessively impatient of being trodden on, and very persistent as to the poking in of their written demands with tops of canes and handles of umbrellas. The clerks in this office ought to rival the lamented Sir Charles Bell in their knowledge of the expression of the hand. The varieties of hands that hover about the grating, and are thrust through the little doorways in it, are a continual study for them—or would be, if they had any time to spare, which assuredly they have not. The coarse-grained hand which seems all thumb and knuckle, and no nail, and which takes up money or puts it down with such an odd, clumsy, lumbering touch; the retail trader's hand, which chinks it up and tosses it over with a bounce; the housewife's hand, which has a lingering propensity to keep some of it back, and to drive a bargain by not paying in the last shilling or so of the sum for which her order is obtained; the quick, the slow, the coarse, the fine, the sensitive and dull, the ready and unready—they are always at the grating all day long. Hovering behind the owners of these hands, observant of the various transactions in which they engage, is a tall constable (rather potential with the matrons and widows on account of his

portly aspect), who assists the bewildered female public, explains the nature of the printed forms put ready to be filled up for the quicker issuing of orders and the greater exactness as to names, and has an eye on the unready one, as he knots his money up in a pocket-handkerchief or crams it into a greasy pocket-book. If you have any bad money by you, be careful not to bring it here. The portly constable will whisk you into a back office before you can say Jack Robinson, will snip your bad half-crown or five-shilling piece in half directly, and (at the best), after searching inquiry, will fold the pieces in a note of your name and address, and consign them to a bundle of similar trophies for evermore.

* * * * * *

'This sort of mystification is even more surprising than that under which certain uneducated individuals (Irish) have been known to labour. The belief has more than once been manifested at a Money Order Office window that the mere payment of the commission would be sufficient to procure an order for five pounds; the form of paying in the five pounds being deemed purely optional. An Irish gentleman (who had left his hod at the door) recently applied in Aldersgate Street for an order for five pounds on a Tipperary post office; for which he tendered (probably congratulating himself on having hit upon so good an investment) sixpence. It required a lengthened argument to prove to him that he would have to pay the five pounds into the office before his friend could receive that small amount in Tipperary; and he went away, after all, evidently convinced that his not having this order was one of the personal wrongs of Ireland, and one of the particular injustices done to hereditary bondsmen only.

* * * * * *

'Despite the prodigious increase in the business of the department which we have pointed out, its efficiency has been doubled, and its cost almost halved. By superseding seventy-eight superfluous ledgers, the labour of sixty clerks has been saved; by simply reducing the size of the money orders and advices, the expense of paper and print alone has been diminished by 1100*l.* per annum; while the abolition of separate advices of each transaction has economised the number of letters by 46,000 weekly. The upshot is, that

these economical reforms have effected a saving in the Money Order Office alone equal to 17,000*l.* *per annum.*'

As a supplement to the foregoing extracts I quote from my journal the following statistical record:—

'*June 7th*, 1853.—The accounts of the Money Order Office for 1852 show an increase of profit of 4227*l.*, making a total for the year of 11,664*l.* In 1847, when I took to the department, there was a loss of 10,600*l.* a year; so that the effective saving is upwards of 22,000*l.* a year.'

GENERAL ECONOMIC MEASURES.

Various improvements noticeable under this head (some of them of considerable importance) are omitted here as being more conveniently mentioned under other categories, as Money Orders, Conveyance of Mails, Packet Service, &c.

The following, though of economic tendency, was, as will be perceived, more beneficial in another respect:—

'*October 29th*, 1851.—A clerkship at Hong Kong having become vacant by death, the Postmaster-General has, on my recommendation * * * determined not to fill it up, and to employ part of the saving thus effected in giving to the postmaster and each of the remaining clerks in turn leave of absence for a year and a half, with full salary and an allowance of 100*l.* towards the expense of the voyage. By these means, while ample force will still be left, the poor fellows will have the opportunity of recruiting their health, and a saving will be effected of 183*l.* a year.'

The boon was gratefully received.

By merely entering into negotiations for substituting coach for railway train we obtained from the Belfast and Ballymena Railway Company a voluntary reduction in charge of more than 2000*l.* a year, and this with some gain in time; again, by substituting car for coach between Limerick and Galway, we obtained another reduction of 1200*l.* a year; while the discontinuance of a night mail between Belfast

and Londonderry, justified by improvements serving the same end, and in themselves advantageous to the revenue as well as to the public, there was effected a further saving of 850*l.* a year; and lastly, the expenses of the Belfast and Enniskillen mail were, concurrently with a positive increase in public convenience, reduced by more than 1000*l.* a year: thus making in Irish mails alone an annual saving of more than 4000*l.*: all this being, of course, in addition to the still larger savings already mentioned.*

As regards English mails I found, on careful inquiry, that by new arrangements, planned with due regard to public convenience, a mail between Rugby and Derby *viâ* Leicester might be withdrawn, so as to save about 2000*l.* a year; a measure which would have been carried into effect had not the Midland Company better met our requirement by entering into a contract giving us the use of all the trains throughout their system for a fixed payment of reasonable amount.

Another measure provided for some immediate and a large prospective saving in the cost of guards, the duties of many amongst whom I found, on examination, to be so light as not to occupy, on the average, more than three or four hours per day. It is a curious fact that I was led to the examination resulting in this discovery by an application for increased force.

The following refers to a subject mentioned before:—

'*November* 12*th*, 1852.—Tilley has, with my concurrence, taken up the subject of "officers in charge." Referring to my minute of July, 1849, he proposes a measure which is substantially the same as mine, and shows that it will effect a saving of between four and five thousand a year, the expenses having somewhat increased since my minute was

* See p. 151.

written. * * * Had my plan been adopted when first proposed, the [total] saving would have amounted by this time to about 15,000*l.*'

In the year 1851 prepayment in money of postage on inland letters was abolished at all those provincial offices where it had been thus far allowed, and I find it afterwards recorded in my journal that the change produced no complaint. Early in the following year, at the earnest request of Mr. Cornwall, secretary to the Irish Post Office, the abolition was extended to Dublin. Edinburgh soon followed; and in sanctioning this latter extension the Postmaster-General (Lord Hardwicke) expressed a desire that I should prepare a similar minute in regard to London. Of course I was not slow to act on this suggestion, and on the 1st of August in the same year the measure came into operation; thus completing the establishment of prepayment by stamps alone throughout the United Kingdom, and greatly simplifying our proceedings.

To save trouble, however, to the senders of large numbers of circulars, a limited exception was still allowed at the chief office in St. Martin's-le-Grand, the rule eventually taking this form, viz., to receive prepayment in money from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. in sums of not less than 2*l.* at a time.

And thus, with this trifling exception, was carried into full effect, and I believe without a dissentient voice, a mode of payment which it was at one time maintained that the public would regard with such disfavour that its unpopularity would be found a serious obstacle, if not an insuperable bar, to the whole scheme of penny postage.

CONVEYANCE OF MAILS.

As the reader is aware, I had long regarded it as

of primary importance to obtain a general Act regulating railway charges to the Post Office, an Act that should *fix* the charges for ordinary trains, and establish some principle applicable to other cases, and thus either supersede arbitration—generally a very unsatisfactory expedient—or confine it within definite bounds. There seemed at one time a prospect of some progress in this direction, a bill being introduced into Parliament by Government, under the administration of Lord John Russell, the object of which was to remove doubts as to our right to send a guard as a passenger by any ordinary train with the mails as his luggage, and also to authorize our sending bags as parcels on payment of the usual parcel rates; a measure which, if adopted, would have enabled us to establish additional mails, especially between the larger towns, at hours when the correspondence, though important, is not sufficient to justify the high charges usually made by the railway companies. Of course I did all in my power to support such a measure, great part of which was, indeed, of my own conception, but nothing was effected, the bill being first so modified, through concessions to the railway companies, as to become worse than useless, and then, because yet further modification was resisted by the Government, altogether thrown out.

Eighteen months later, under the authority of Lord Hardwicke, I prepared clauses, intended to secure fair rates of charge, for insertion in all new railway bills; and these his lordship determined to incorporate in a bill, with a view to their extension also to existing railways; I estimated that their adoption (and they were perfectly fair) would reduce our annual expenditure in railway conveyance, then about 360,000*l.*, by at least 100,000*l.*

The overthrow of Lord Derby's administration,

which occurred a few days later, of course transferred the matter to other hands.

A committee being appointed on railway and canal bills in the session of 1853, with Mr. Cardwell as chairman, I gave evidence,* of which the following is a summary.

I showed that the existing relations between the Post Office and the railway companies were very unsatisfactory, tending greatly to restrict the use of the railways for the conveyance of mails, to the real injury of the companies, and still more to that of the public; also, that while the construction of railways had greatly reduced the cost of conveying passengers and goods, it had largely increased that of conveying the mails; that, since the opening of railways, although the total weight of mail had increased by only 140 per cent., the cost of its conveyance had increased by nearly 300 per cent., viz., from 112,000*l.* in 1836 to about 442,000*l.* (of which about 362,000*l.* was for railway conveyance) in 1852; and I laid before the committee a bill † (approved first by Lord Hardwicke, and afterwards by Lord Canning) framed with a view of prescribing rates of charge for mails conveyed by ordinary trains (those run at hours determined by the companies), such rates being fully equal, all things considered, to those charged to the public for like services, and of laying down a principle of arbitration in respect of trains run at hours fixed by the Postmaster-General. I also laid before the committee a copy of my Report to the Postmaster-General of the 1st of January, 1847.‡

The committee, in its Report, referred especially to my evidence, and, in the main, adopted my view, expressing an opinion "that the companies should afford to the Post Office, at the same charge as would be paid by private individuals for similar services,

* 'Fifth Report,' pp. 175—191. † p. 243. ‡ p. 246.

every assistance which might add to the convenience of the public. They think that no railway should have any claim to be considered as fulfilling its obligations to the district in which it is situate which fails to facilitate in this way the postal communications of that district."*

Nothing, however, was accomplished; and repeated attempts, subsequently made, were equally unavailable. In truth, the railway influence is so strong in Parliament, and, on this point, so little guided by a knowledge of true railway interests, that the injurious law enacted thirty years ago, though avowedly a temporary measure, to last only until experience of the working of railways should have afforded the requisite data for laying down a scale of charges, continues in force to the present day.

Meanwhile, willing to try what could be done with the existing laws, I devised a new application of them.

Being pressed to supply Ayr and the neighbouring towns with a more direct communication than they then enjoyed, and finding that the railway company to be dealt with, though having suitable trains actually running, refused to carry the mails except at prices far beyond what the correspondence would justify, I devised a new kind of notice, which the solicitor to the Post Office regarded as strictly legal, requiring the company to carry the mails by the existing trains, but leaving them at liberty to alter, or withdraw these trains altogether on giving us fifteen days' notice. Under such a notice our arbitrator was of opinion that the remuneration awarded would be, as it ought to be, very low. This plan succeeding, I obtained its extension to some other lines, but at length met with resistance from one of the companies; and, on reference to the law officers

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 16.

of the Crown, our claim was pronounced untenable, they holding that by the law as it stood the Postmaster-General was bound (whether he desired it or not) to *fix* the hours for the mail-trains without reference to the arrangements of the companies. The Post Office is thus kept in a position quite unintelligible to the public, who cannot understand why existing trains, obviously capable of employment for postal service, are not used wherever convenience requires; the real obstacle being that the amount of correspondence in question, though sufficient to justify the expense of conveyance at a moderate rate —a rate, however, fully remunerative to the company—is often quite insufficient to meet the heavy cost of a regular mail train.

Amidst these efforts to procure that cheapness of conveyance which would justify greater frequency of despatch, it was obviously of importance to obtain for the conveyance of the mails the greatest practicable speed, though the public can be little aware how many difficulties, direct and incidental, attend acceleration.

In the year 1851 we called upon the North Western Company to accelerate its mail trains, but met with resistance. In a conference with Captain Huish, the manager of the line, while explicitly insisting on our right to require the change, I expressed a wish to meet the convenience of the company as far as possible, and proposed a modification, which I hoped would remove objections; but, after a week's consideration, the company persisted in its refusal, disputing our right to require them to carry mails at a speed exceeding twenty-seven miles an hour, including stoppages, a view unfortunately supported by our solicitor; though my brother Frederic, himself a lawyer, on examination of the Acts, gave a different opinion, which was soon after-

wards confirmed by my brother Matthew. Meanwhile, however, at the desire of the Postmaster-General, I made a compromise with the company until the opinion of the Crown officers should be obtained. By this, when given, our right was sustained.

Even the amount of acceleration thus procured proved highly valuable, was very popular in the City, and produced some strong expressions of thanks; but before the end of the year I procured sanction for the gradual introduction of a measure to run the mails, at least on the long lines of road, at express speed; and, as a step towards the earlier despatch of the day mails from London, arranged for receiving more letters on the previous nights by delaying the hour of latest collection from 8 P.M. to 10 P.M.; an arrangement which, beside its direct benefit, also materially assisted in further improving the morning despatch of general post letters to the country parts of the London district.

Of course nearly every general improvement interferes more or less with particular convenience, and complaint naturally takes a more positive shape than approbation. The manager of the 'Times,' and Mr. Smith, the great newsvender, took alarm at inconveniences expected to arise from the earlier closing of the letter-boxes in the morning, which was necessary for the earlier despatch of the day mails, and thought the change impracticable. I do not doubt that both these gentlemen would now smile at the difficulties which they then regarded as so formidable.

The gain by this further acceleration was to Leeds four hours and a half, to York more than five, to Newcastle more than six, and to Berwick more than seven.

Amidst this improvement of the day mails, the

night mails also had their share of attention, being so accelerated about three months later as to save about two hours and a half at Newcastle and other important towns.

The work of acceleration was quickened by a manœuvre of the Great Northern Railway Company, which, in July of that year, spontaneously began to run a train at night mail time, and at such speed as to outstrip the mail train on the North Western line. Believing that the object was to force upon us, through the public voice, the use of this train, of course at a large expense, I applied to the North Western Company for such acceleration on their line as would obviate the demand; and it was at this time that I first suggested what are now called limited mails, though the expedient was not adopted till some years afterwards. By the further acceleration effected on this application the interval for reply was extended at Edinburgh and Glasgow, and of course at all towns further northward, by four hours.

The plan of limited mails, when brought into operation, raised the speed along the North Western route to forty miles an hour including stoppages, a rate the very notion of which would have been regarded thirty years before as a madman's dream.

The great extent of the acceleration in the northern mails eventually obtained may be exemplified as follows. When I first took the matter in hand, though there was railway conveyance over the whole distance, a letter leaving London by the night mail for Edinburgh or Glasgow could not receive answer until the afternoon of the next day but one, the answer to a Monday night's letter, for instance, not arriving until the afternoon of Wednesday; since the Monday night mail did not reach its destination until after the departure of the return mail appointed to reach London on Wednesday

morning; whereas now (1870) the Monday night mail from London reaching Edinburgh or Glasgow on Tuesday morning, and the return mail not starting until Tuesday evening, not only is the answer to a Monday night's letter received on Wednesday morning, but also there is allowed for writing it an interval of not less than ten or eleven hours; in effect, a whole day. This result is easily stated, but were I to attempt to detail the preliminary arrangements essential to the series of changes by which it was effected, or the various devices by which difficulties had to be surmounted, I should weary out the reader and even tire myself. Let it suffice to give some notion as to the multiplicity of arrangements affected, and the almost theatrical suddenness of the transition. The day before each successive change everything remained exactly in *statu quo;* every branch mail along the whole line had to bring up its mail at the established time; every office, sub-office, receiving-house, and pillar-box, had to yield up its letters in accordance with this arrangement, closing therefore to the public, at such hour as best suited such requirement; every rural messenger, on foot or on horseback, had to arrive in accordance with the time for such closing; and, in this case, thousands of receiving places and thousands of messengers were concerned; and all this being the proceeding of one day, on the next everything was different, the hour everywhere altered, so much so that, at some of the places remote from the starting point, the alteration involved even substitution of day for night or the reverse. Of course every person concerned had to be apprised of the change, and prepared for it; a single surveyor might have to issue instructions to a thousand offices, and these to as many messengers, since ignorance or neglect in any member of the force would inevitably

have produced confusion fruitful of annoyance and complaint in the places served. It must be added that the highly complicated provision thus made for the mails in one direction had all to be repeated for those in the opposite direction.

I need not say that innovation is often pointed to as the source of evils with which it has no real connection.

Thus, great irregularity having occurred in the mails to the north of Scotland, through long detention at Forfar—purposely made by the railway company in consequence of the Post Office disputing their right to claim extra payment for forwarding the mails (when late) by the train which actually carried on their passengers—there was great dissatisfaction and anger at Aberdeen and elsewhere; the blame being unjustly laid on the Post Office, and, through mere coincidence of time, charged upon the recent acceleration of the mails.

Of course the higher the speed the greater, other things equal, is the danger of irregularity; and complaint on this head arose in no measured tone. As our representations to the companies were met by allegations of unpunctuality on our part, I proposed a covenant by which they and the Post Office should be mutually subjected to fine whenever irregularity occurred, but the offer found little acceptance. Finding this to be the case, and that the continued irregularity of the northern mails still provoked severe attacks on the Post Office, I sought defence by publishing a circular which I had addressed to the railway companies concerned. This step, however, produced a number of letters in reply, some of them equally skilful and unscrupulous. Effectual rejoinder would have made an intolerable demand on my time and strength, so that I began to repent having resorted to publicity at all. Objection-

able as it is to allow to misrepresentation the advantage of inferences to be drawn from silence, it may be questioned if it be not better to leave rectification to the hand of time than to involve oneself and one's department in distracting controversy. Indeed, one of our Post Office officials goes so far as to declare that if he found himself charged in a newspaper with parricide, he would hold his tongue lest the accusation should be repeated next day with the aggravation of matricide.

While, however, submitting to misconception, I sought means to obtain substantial ends; and for this purpose, in preparing a scheme of mutual fines, I added premiums for punctuality, hoping thereby both to obtain the consent of the companies to the plan as a whole, and to supply a new motive to exertion and care. I also planned the conveyance of the mails on one of the principal lines by special trains absolutely limited to mail service, which I hoped to accomplish at moderate expense by inducing the companies to join in an arrangement under which, the bare additional cost in each instance being ascertained by a neutral authority (some eminent engineer), we should be bound to pay a certain fixed multiple of that amount. Captain Galton of the Board of Trade, and Sir William Cubitt entirely approved of both these plans, the latter estimating the cost in question at from one shilling to one shilling and threepence per mile, and advising that we should offer to pay two and a half times that amount. Under this rule, it may be observed, the Post Office would have to pay less for the whole train than it now frequently pays for only a small part of one.

The proposal of mutual fines for unpunctuality, notwithstanding its sweetener of rewards for punctuality, found but little favour with the companies, and

the same remark applies to the plan of charge by fixed scale; but the proposed special mail service was ultimately adopted.

The introduction of the apparatus for exchanging bags without the stoppage of the train naturally excited considerable attention. Probably, however, many of my readers know little of the process beyond its result. That which takes place is as follows: The bags to be forwarded, being suspended from a projecting arm at the station, are so knocked off by a projection from the train as to fall into a net which is attached to the mail carriage, and is for the moment stretched out to receive them, while, at the same time, the bags to be left behind, being hung out from the mail carriage, are in like manner so struck off as to be caught in a net fixed at the station; the whole of this complex movement being so instantaneous that the uninformed eye cannot follow it.

'*April 9th,* 1853.—The mail inspector reports that the people on the line of the [recently] accelerated mail assemble in crowds to see the bags exchanged at those stations at which the train does not stop. "Half Yorkshire," he says, was assembled at Northallerton; but, though very much delighted, the people appear to have had no notion of what was really accomplished. Seeing a set of bags hanging from a sort of lamp-post before the train arrived, and a similar set in a net below after it had passed, their notion was that the use of the machinery was merely to transfer the bags from the one to the other.'

Interest and amusement, however, were not unmingled with feelings of a very different kind. It scarcely need be said that the operation in question requires very careful management both in the train and at the station; and even with such management an element of danger remains increasing in proportion to the speed of the train and weight of the bags. In fact, as the use of the bag apparatus

extended, some slight accidents occurred, and in my anxiety I induced the Postmaster-General to call for a report from Sir William Cubitt on the subject; and this being delayed through Sir William's indisposition, I took upon myself, the Postmaster-General just then being absent, to issue instructions restricting and in some cases suspending their use. This difficulty, I may however state, was ultimately overcome by an improvement devised by my son in the bag-exchanging apparatus; and I may be allowed to add that Sir William Cubitt, who had himself failed to devise means for surmounting the difficulty, candidly and kindly expressed a very high opinion of my son's expedient.

It remains to mention some negotiations with separate companies.

I have already spoken of a move made by the Great Northern Railway Company for the purpose of compelling the Post Office to use their line. I may remark, by the way, that such proceedings were not peculiar to this company; since every such corporation naturally desires to increase its traffic, is somewhat prone to accept all facts that seem to support its claim, and to waive over-curious inquiry into facts on the other side; and, when thus led to believe the public interest identical with its own, is naturally tempted to give such colouring to its case as promises to obtain for it most acceptance. There was another move on the part of the Great Northern Railway Company in the year 1852. I learnt that a deputation was about to wait on the Postmaster-General (Lord Hardwicke) to urge the use of their line as a means of accelerating the night mails to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and I was informed by Mr. Tilley that it was his lordship's intention to accede to the demand. As the matter was in my department, I undertook to prepare a minute on the

subject, and my recommendation, being adopted, produced to the department a saving of 25,000*l.* a year.

Two years later, ordinary means having failed, the company, in concert with the North Eastern Company, procured a Parliamentary Committee, by whose aid it hoped to attain the desired end; and, in anticipation of some such move, I prepared an elaborate memorandum showing that the desired change, if made simply, would produce much more inconvenience than advantage to the public; that to make it effectual for the expected benefits would involve enormous cost (about 30,000*l.* a year); that after all the district so benefited would be very limited; and, in fine, that the public would be much better served by accelerating, at a mere fraction of the expense, the trains already employed.

The memorandum will be found in the Report of the Select Committee on Railway Conveyance (1854, No. 411, p. 498), and it may be referred to as exemplifying at once the great difficulties encountered in dealing with such cases, and the great labour necessarily bestowed upon them in the Post Office.

The proceedings of this committee seriously retarded improvements then in progress by occupying much of my time and of that of Mr. Edward Page. The result of its deliberations appears in my journal as follows:—

'*September*, 1854.—The committee have made their report. The verdict is virtually in our favour, inasmuch as the committee leave the decision as to the proper route to Newcastle with the Postmaster-General. They do one very good thing—this is, they "recommend that a Commission of two or more experienced engineers should be appointed expressly to consider whether a tonnage toll, or mileage rate, to include every charge, could not be fixed for Post Office service, which, though not exactly suited to each particular case, might be generally fair to all parties."'

If some companies gave us trouble, there were others with which our negotiations were altogether of an easy, pleasant, and satisfactory character.

The first of these was the Lancashire and Yorkshire Company, which, in November, 1851, spontaneously made an offer similar to that of the North Western Company, but on terms so fair as rendered negotiation very brief and easy. The other was the Midland Company, with which, through friendly communication with the deputy chairman, Mr. Samuel Beale, a former pupil of mine, afterwards M.P. for Derby, matters were put on the satisfactory footing mentioned before, the arrangement enabling us to give to the West Riding nearly all the improvements so earnestly pressed for when I visited that important district.

RECTIFICATION OF ACCOUNTS.

The reader will remember how long and how ineffectually I once strove to obtain the rectification of accounts relative to the true amount of the postal revenue. In 1852, however, I succeeded in demonstrating to Lord Hardwicke that if the Post Office were charged, on the one hand, with a fair share of the packet service, and received credit, on the other hand, for the stamp duty on newspapers, which was then, as it is now, a mere postage rate, the net revenue would be found, not, as was then maintained by some persons, nothing at all, but, as set forth in the ordinary accounts of the department, more than a million per annum; and a year later Lord Canning, then Postmaster-General, giving me the draft Report of the Packet Commission which he had prepared as chairman, with a request that I would look it over, I found that he had adopted my views, and argued the whole case exceedingly well, though he expressed doubts as to the agreement of his colleagues. I may

mention here that ten years later I prepared an elaborate memorandum as to the means of ascertaining the true net revenue of the Post Office. This paper, in which the incidence of the packet service expense, as well as other questions relative to the subject, is duly treated of, will be found in the Appendix (I).

PACKET SERVICE.

Lord Canning's Commission.

Of the able Report of the Commission, already mentioned, commonly called Lord Canning's Commission, the following are some of the leading points. It will be observed that the question relative to the just incidence of the charge for mail packets is not directly dealt with, though there is enough to show that the feeling of the Commission accorded with my view.

The Commission, which included not only Lord Canning, but Sir Stafford Northcote, gave, in their Report, a brief history of the introduction of contract mail packets, explained under what special circumstances heavy subsidies for these packets appeared necessary, and expressed it as their opinion that when use can be made (as is now the case in every instance) of steamers which carry passengers and freight, large subsidies are no longer required. They added that after a new route has been opened for the extension of commerce, and sufficient time allowed for the experiment, the further continuance of the service, unless required for political services of adequate importance, should be made to depend on its tendency to become self-supporting. The committee also advised the omission in future contracts of many conditions which tend to increase the cost; and recommended that the contract should be reduced to a simple undertaking (with penalties for failure) to convey the mails at fixed periods and with a certain

degree of speed; a recommendation which was afterwards to a great extent carried into effect; as was also, though not in the same degree, another recommendation, viz., to make the payment, when practicable, consist of a portion of the sea-postage.

The committee further advised that, except on the establishment of a new route, no contracts should be entered into for a long period. In this matter, as in the question of dispensing with conditions regarding the construction, size, and steam-power of the ships to be employed, and other things, the course generally taken by the Post Office, on my brother's advice, was thenceforth so to frame the forms of tender as to ascertain the exact amount of expense involved in the several requirements; a specification which naturally led to the abandonment of any whose cost exceeded their value, and thus, in effect, produced a large economy.

The following passage shows the opinion of the Commissioners as to the extent to which Government should undertake and maintain transmarine postal communication. The recommendations are still very worthy of attention:—

'In undertaking this duty [transmarine postal communication] the Government will, in the first place, have regard to the national interests, whether political, social, or commercial, involved in the establishment and maintenance of each particular line. Care must, however, be taken, in cases where the communication is desired for commercial purposes, to guard against an undue expenditure of public money for the benefit of private merchants. The extension of commerce is undoubtedly a national advantage, and it is quite reasonable that Parliamentary grants should occasionally be employed for the sake of affording fresh openings for it by establishing new lines of communication or introducing new methods of conveyance, the expense of which, after the first outlay has been incurred, may be expected to be borne by the parties availing themselves of the facilities afforded them. But this

having once been done, and sufficient time having been allowed for the experiment, the further continuance of the service, unless required for political reasons of adequate importance, should be made to depend upon the extent to which the parties chiefly interested avail themselves of it and upon its tendency to become self-supporting.*

How valuable these recommendations were, how long they were observed, when they were set aside, and with what result, will appear hereafter.

COLONIAL POSTAGE.

Towards the end of 1851, learning that an influential association had been formed for obtaining a low rate of transmarine postage, and fearing that the Government might be placed in the dilemma of having either to resist a popular demand or to submit to a very serious loss of revenue, I proposed to the Postmaster-General (Lord Clanricarde) a middle course, viz., a reduction of colonial postage generally to sixpence, the rate at the time being for the most part one shilling; though, had I foreseen what experience has now shown, viz., that where long distances are concerned the increase of correspondence bears comparatively little relation to the amount of charge, I should probably have hesitated before advising concession even so far. The proposed measure, however, was not adopted at the time, nor under the administration of Lord Derby, though it received the approbation of Lord Hardwicke, and the strong support of Sir John Pakington, then Secretary of State for the Colonies; but early in 1853, Lord Canning being then Postmaster-General, and Mr. Gladstone Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was at length sanctioned; too late, indeed, to forestal public demand, but still early enough to prevent this from acquiring troublesome force.

* 'Report.' p. 4.

'*March 5th.*—The "Daily News" of this morning contains an account of the Postmaster-General's reception of a deputation yesterday, which came to urge the extension of penny postage to the colonies.'

It may not be amiss to remark here that this demand, which has often been repeated, is generally based on a false analogy. Penny postage, it is contended, is eminently successful at home, therefore it must needs succeed abroad; distance is not taken into account on land, therefore it need not be reckoned by sea; home letters have multiplied enormously under reduced rates in the United Kingdom, and the same result may be counted on in our correspondence with the most distant colonies. Here it is forgotten that before a penny postage was established at home it was ascertained that a penny charge was more than sufficient to defray all expenses, and that no such proof has been given with regard to expenses abroad; that distance by land was not disregarded until it was shown that the variation in cost was far too small to be expressed in the lowest coin of the realm; and lastly, that where very great distances are concerned, where in the nature of things answer is slow, multiplication of letters is but moderately affected by the lowering of rate. When contractors will undertake to carry letters to India or Australia for the same charge as to Glasgow or Aberdeen—starting at fixed times and proceeding at the highest practicable speed—ocean penny postage will become a practical question; till then the consideration must, I fear, be postponed.

On the subject of the deputation my journal thus continues:—

'The Postmaster-General explained the intentions of the Government on the subject. The Treasury authority for the sixpenny rate has now been received; it postpones, however, the extension of the measure to any of the colonies till the

necessary negotiations have been entered into with those not under our control.'

Here, too, it may be useful to touch on a popular misconception. It is commonly supposed that the Home Government can of its own authority make changes as regards colonial postage, whereas, save in Crown colonies alone, such changes must await the consent of the Colonial Government.

'*March 7th*, 1853.—The "Times" of this morning contains an admirable leader on the above subject [the general reduction of Colonial Postage]. A little complaining at the hardship of charging a penny for carrying a newspaper to the antipodes must be forgiven.'

From this article I make the following extracts :—

'We have this day to announce a step which, simple and unpretending as it may seem, is really a greater move towards a complete unity of our independent empire than the most splendid conquest or the largest annexation. In reply to a deputation last Friday the Postmaster-General stated that, as soon as the colonial assents could be obtained and the proper arrangements made, it was intended to reduce the postage of letters for every part of the British dominions abroad to the uniform rate of sixpence the half-ounce. The present average postage of colonial letters is not less than fourteenpence. What will be gained is the low rate, *and the uniformity, which experience has shown to be scarcely less appreciated than cheapness.* Very shortly, therefore, it will be in the power of any of our readers to drop a letter into the box of the next cottage or in the next street, to his friends on the slopes of the Himalaya, or at Mount Alexander, or at Vancouver's Island, or at Toronto, with the certainty, as far as the whole power of Government can secure it, of having an answer back at the cost, for the postage of the two letters, of one shilling. The answer from across the Atlantic will probably be within a month; that from Simla or Lahore within three months; and that from the antipodes within half a year. A party of emigrants sailing this week may hope to arrive at Geelong or Adelaide soon after midsummer, and about Michaelmas their friends at home, supposing the

arrangement completed, may hope to receive full accounts of their voyage and safe arrival at the moderate cost of sixpence. Let people talk as they please of the sun never setting on our dominions, and of the British flag waving over every sea and every shore, nothing brings before our mind so forcibly the fact that we are everywhere, and that everywhere we represent the spirit of progress, as this little type of universal power—this letter given to the village postman in March, with an answer from mid-Asia in June. There is something grand and showy enough in the returns that appear from time to time in our military and naval journals, giving the stations of our ships and of soldiers in every part of the world; but the grandeur of the idea is qualified by many painful considerations, for the whole is merely an ill remedy for a still worse evil. But there is no such alloy in the thought that any member of the British Empire, comprehending an eighth of the human species, will be able to communicate with any other within a space of time and at a cost incredible to our forefathers, and even hitherto unattainable. Considering how much there is that is questionable in our dominion, in its means and in its results, it is satisfactory to find one means and one result of undoubted advantage to the whole human race, viz., that we draw mankind together, and bring the whole world, so to speak, within hearing distance.'

BOOK POST.

The ill-judged treaty which bound us to carry certain printed matter to the United States at the low charge of one penny for two ounces, though with very high charges for greater weights, led to discontent in Canada, which, though enjoying an arrangement far more favourable on the whole, was subjected to a higher minimum charge; and the Canadian complaint was backed by Lord Grey, then Secretary for the Colonies. Negotiations were therefore entered into with the United States Government for the substitution of a regular book-post for the existing arrangement.

To recover a false step, however, is notoriously less easy than to make or even to avoid it, and the negotiation proved fruitless, the failure being the more unsatisfactory because of the motive for the rejection of our proposals (fully shown in the progress of the negotiations), viz., the desire to protect American literary piracy from the competition of our legitimate production. I am happy to record, however (1868), that a better spirit has prevailed, and that books are now sent by post to the United States as elsewhere.

In the year 1852, Lord Wrottesley calling to inform me that the British Association for the Promotion of Science was about to apply to Government for the international transmission of scientific publications at a low rate, I pointed out to him that it would be much better to apply for a general book-post, and the application was modified accordingly.

Meantime, with the concurrence of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry in the East Indies and of the East India Company, I obtained from Lord Hardwicke, though with some difficulty, sanction to a measure for extending the book-post to the East Indies; and soon afterwards, with the ready sanction of Lord Canning, who had just then acceded to office, I obtained the renewal of negotiations for extending the book-post to Prussia, which now accepted our offer; lastly, arrangements were completed for giving the same convenience to New South Wales.

SALARIES AND PROMOTION.

Early in 1852 my brother Frederic completed a measure adjusting the salaries of the rural sub-postmasters (about six thousand, I believe, in number), advancing some and depressing others, according to

the ascertained amount of work, and laying down a rule for the decision of all future cases. In addition to the benefit of sound adjustment the measure produced an immediate saving of about 400*l.* a year, with a prospective annual saving, as incumbents resigned or died off, of upwards of 4,000*l.*

Somewhat later, the Postmaster-General having decided, on receipt of a memorial from the clerks of the Money Order Office, that their salaries should be revised, I prepared a minute, which received Lord Hardwicke's ready sanction, and which I intended to serve as a model for other departments. Its substance was, first, to prepare a scheme of salaries, classes, &c., according to the best practicable ideal; to make this the ground of all future appointments, and gradually to apply it, with due modification, to the clerks already in the service. Further, it assigned to each clerk a small yearly increase of salary in case of continued good conduct, regulated the number of classes and the complement of each by the gradations and amount of duty, made promotion strictly dependent upon fitness for higher service, and laid down "that the amount of salary assigned to the respective classes should be such, and such only, as will suffice to secure the services of thoroughly competent men."

My hope that this minute would serve as a model for more general regulations did not wait long for fulfilment.

While these changes were in progress, other departments of the Office were applying for a revision of salaries, and, as a means of securing uniformity of action, essential to general contentment, I offered to deal myself with all such cases; and though this offer was but very partially accepted at the time, a more decided step towards a uniform system was taken soon afterwards, as already mentioned, by the ap-

pointment of a Commission for the general revision of salaries in several departments of the Civil Service.

My examination before this Commission occupied eight days, and I had the satisfaction to find its views concurring to the full extent with my own and my brother Frederic's on the important points of patronage, promotion, and classification.

The Report of this important Commission was issued in the year 1854. Amongst the many valuable recommendations which it contained, the following are perhaps the most noticeable :—

The Commissioners first object to the double secretariate, and, observing that "the business of the Post Office is of a kind which peculiarly requires centralization," recommend that the whole should be placed under the direction of a single secretary; a recommendation the effect of which has already appeared.

They advise that, in order to place "the highest prizes within the reach of every deserving person, means should be taken "for opening the ranks of the Secretary's Office to all members of the establishment."

They further advise that, throughout the department, individual salaries should advance by annual increments, instead of by large jumps at long intervals; all advancement, however, to be contingent on good conduct.

After mentioning the division of the circulation department into the "Inland Office," and the "London District Office," and showing "the analogous character of these two offices," they recommend the consolidation of the two.

They point out that to obtain suitable men on reasonable terms, it is "necessary to hold out prospects of advancement to those who conduct themselves well,

and who manifest the qualifications which are required for superior posts," so that "by a proper encouragement to merit, economy and efficiency may be combined."

To improve the discipline of the provincial offices —an improvement then much required—they recommend that the respective postmasters should, under approval and in accordance with prescribed rules, appoint their own clerks.

They proceed to make the golden recommendation that "all promotion should be strictly regulated according to qualification and merit;" a rule, which, could its complete observance be secured, would in time raise any department to the highest state of efficiency and economy.

Their next recommendation deals with one of those anomalies in which our political and social structure, from its unsystematic nature, so much abounds. Every uninformed person would naturally assume that all provincial postmasters (deputy-postmasters, as they are technically called) must be appointed by the Postmaster-General; whereas, at the time in question all such appointments were in the hands of the Treasury; and, still worse, the nomination left in effect to the member of parliament for the district where the vacancy occurred, provided only he were a general supporter of the Government. Of this anomaly the Commissioners recommended the removal, not only on account of the more obvious reasons, but also "because the power which the Postmaster-General would possess of rewarding meritorious officers in his own department, by promoting them to the charge of the important provincial offices, would materially conduce to the general efficiency of the whole body."

This recommendation the Treasury so far adopted as to concede to the Postmaster-General the appoint-

ment to all postmasterships where the salary exceeded 175*l.* per annum, observing that the principle of making such appointment the reward of merit "would be inapplicable in all cases where the post office is held in conjunction with a private business or profession." And here I may remark that, though it is true that the powers and responsibilities of the chief office can never be placed on a completely satisfactory footing until all subordinate appointments are placed at its disposal, still the concession made was very large and highly valuable, and the relinquishment of so much patronage reflects great honour on the Liberal Administration then in power.*

The last recommendation which I shall cite is one of far more importance than would appear on the face of it, viz., that the Postmaster-General "should determine the future complement of each class according to the nature and amount of duty to be performed in it." It might seem incredible that such a recommendation should be needed, but hitherto the number in a class had had but little reference to the amount of appertaining duty, and indeed, as mentioned in an earlier part of this narrative, the division implied no real classification whatever, so that in many instances men of high class were, through lack of ability, employed at low-class work, and *vice versâ.*

The Report of the Commissioners, being referred by the Treasury to the Postmaster-General, Lord Canning, and having received his almost unqualified approval, was ordered, with little more exception than that already mentioned, to be carried into effect.

FOREIGN EXTENSION.

October 11*th*, 1851.—Mr. Von der Heydt (Prussian Minister

* A subsequent concession reduced the minimum to 120*l.*

of Finance), Chevalier Bunsen, and M. Drouet (Chargé d'Affaires for the Belgian Government), met in my room to arrange with me several matters connected with the negotiation for a reduction of rates between this country and the German Postal Union.'

The following general record may render further details unnecessary :—

'*November* 29*th*, 1854.—The returns from our Ministers abroad showing the postal improvements in the several foreign countries are now completed. They show that my plan has been adopted more or less completely in the following States: Austria, Baden, Bavaria, Belgium, Brazil, Bremen, Brunswick, Chili, Denmark, France, Frankfort, Hamburg, Hanover, Lubeck, Naples, New Granada, Netherlands, Oldenburg, Peru, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sardinia, Saxony, Spain, Switzerland, Tuscany, United States, Wurtemburg.

'The results are in most cases similar to our own [similar mistakes, probably, being made in the mode of adoption]. They are generally an increase in gross revenue and in expenses, and a decrease in net revenue. In some instances the revenue is exceedingly small: thus the kingdom of Portugal produces a less gross revenue than the city of Edinburgh: in no instance is the revenue, whether gross or net, so large as with us. The extent to which my plan has been adopted in almost every part of the civilized world is very remarkable, and very gratifying. In Europe, Sweden is the only considerable state which forms an exception.'

Sweden did not very long remain an exception.

MINOR IMPROVEMENTS.

Early Delivery.

'*December* 31*st*, 1851.—Frederic has succeeded in satisfying Smith of the practicability of a considerable improvement in the delivery of the general post letters in those parts of the suburbs of London which are about four or five miles from the Post Office. For the last three or four weeks the delivery at Brixton and in the neighbourhood has been about two hours earlier than theretofore, and the improvement will

shortly be extended to Hampstead, Highgate, Stoke Newington, and many other places about equally distant from the Post Office, if the Treasury sanction the small increase of expense necessary. The measure will be a step towards the more perfect plan which I attempted to carry out more than four years ago, but which I was obliged to abandon for the time in consequence of Smith's objections.

'*January* 31*st*, 1852.—The further improvement in the suburban deliveries commenced this morning. At my house [Hampstead] the general post letters were delivered just before nine o'clock, instead of, as heretofore, about half past eleven.'

The hour of morning delivery has now, for many years, been as early as eight. This acceleration by three hours and a half in the principal delivery of the day, especially to the large class resident in the suburbs of London, whose occupations require that they shall leave home by nine or ten o'clock in the morning, is obviously very important. In many cases it makes the difference of a day in their ability to reply.

Facilities for Posting.

Up to this time pillar-boxes were unknown in England, though already in use not only in France, where they were an old institution, but also in some of the principal towns of Germany, and even in the villages of the Channel Islands.

'*January* 8*th*, 1852.—We had a conversation on the subject of street letter-boxes, when I found that the Postmaster-General was not disinclined to a trial of them in the great thoroughfares of London.'

Postal convenience at railway stations was also still unknown.

'*February* 13*th*.—The Postmaster-General has sanctioned a measure of mine which, I expect, will have the effect of converting the railway stations in all the larger towns into gratuitous receiving offices.'

It was still, however, some time before the plan was carried into effect.

NUMBER OF LETTERS.

The following entries show the progressive increase of letters during this period :—

'*January* 19*th*, 1852.—The number of letters which passed through the London Office last week is the greatest on record, being 2,597,000 general post, and 850,000 district post letters; in all, 3,447,000; or considerably more than twice the number under the old system for the whole kingdom. It is remarkable that the London general post letters, which increased to the extent of about 200,000 a week soon after the opening of the Exhibition, continue now that it is closed to be as numerous as ever.

'*January* 20*th*, 1853.—The usual annual account of letters gives 379½ millions for the year 1852, or an increase of 19½ millions on the previous year. The number is exactly five times as great as before reduction. * * * The letters have for the last three or four months increased very rapidly (one of the many signs of prosperity); the last return (for the week ending 21st December) showed an increase of more than 400,000 in the letters passing weekly through London; and on Monday morning last Bokenham tells me that the number of letters which passed through his office was greater than in any previous Monday by 40,000.

'*January* 9*th*, 1855.—The number of letters delivered in the United Kingdom last year was 443½ millions, showing an increase on 1853 of 32½ millions; the largest increase since 1840, the first year of the reduced rates. This great increase is, I think, mainly owing to the extension of rural distribution. In the course of the year, I believe, we have opened more than five hundred offices.'

This large increase of correspondence by the admission of the rural districts to the postal system reminded me of a remark which I had heard from my father many years before, viz., that the result of the first census, while it disappointed expectation as to the population of the towns, exceeded it as to that

of the whole country; the rural districts proving to be better inhabited than had been supposed.

REVENUE.

The revenue meantime was equally progressive, the gross receipts for 1851 being as high as 2,422,000*l.* (an amount somewhat above that obtained before the introduction of my reforms) and the net revenue for the same year 1,118,000*l.* Two years later the gross revenue rose to upwards of 2,500,000*l.*, and the net to nearly 1,200,000*l.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

Benefit Society.

There had long existed in the Office a kind of benefit society, which unfortunately had not escaped those inconveniences to which, for want of scientific management, such institutions are but too liable. As the object of this one was highly commendable, it seemed reasonable that in rectifying its management the department should extend to it some support; and this was effected in the year 1852, by employing for the purpose, of course with Treasury sanction, the proceeds of the void money orders, about 1200*l.* a year; a concession which was followed by letters of thanks to my brother and myself from the Directors of the Fund.

Occasional Pressure.

The following entry gives a specimen of the remarkable contingencies to which the Post Office was then liable, and for which therefore it had always to stand prepared. By improved arrangements the difficulty has in great measure been obviated.

'*July 4th*, 1853.—On Saturday the despatch of the night mails was three-quarters of an hour late; this was caused by the arrival in the course of the day of heavy mails from the following places, viz., the United States, the West Indies, the East Indies, Australia *viâ* Singapore, and Australia *viâ* the Cape. The total number of letters, including inland which reached the General Post Office that day was 458,000, of which 212,000 (chiefly Foreign and Colonial) were unpaid. It was with the greatest difficulty that the work was got through at all.'

Increased Honesty.

I need not say that I made the following record with great satisfaction :—

'*July 8th*, 1853.—A recent return to Parliament of the number and cost of prosecutions [for Post Office offences] from 1848 to 1852 inclusive shows an enormous decrease, nearly, I think, in the ratio of three to one; this very satisfactory result is, I believe, mainly owing to the improved arrangements in the Money Order Office.'

Competitive Examinations.

The following entry is on a subject of some difficulty, and of great importance :—

'*March 4th*, 1854.—The Report of the Commissioners on the Civil Service generally has been issued. Some months ago they requested my opinion on the draft of their Report, in which they had recommended that the patronage should be accumulated chiefly in the hands of the Treasury (*i.e.*, of the Whipper-in for the time being). To this arrangement I objected decidedly, and I now see that they have abandoned it, making the admission to the Service in all cases to depend on a competitive examination, and thus abandoning patronage altogether. This will not, I fear, work well. The competition will, I think, be necessarily thrown on matters of secondary importance. Indeed the Commissioners propose that it shall be literary. The plan is attracting much notice from the public, and is earnestly backed by the "Times." The Report is in many respects excellent. Indeed the

objects aimed at are, without exception, highly creditable to the Commissioners and to the Government.'

As I feared, the plan of competitive examination worked unsatisfactorily, the criteria not being the best, and the responsibility being so divided that no one is in effect answerable for an appointment made under it. The consequence of its adoption has been in many instances the rejection of men who gave promise of great usefulness, and the admission of others whose usefulness has proved very small. If no way had been open to the public service but through competitive examination, as now conducted, I cannot say what might have been my own chance of admission; since, on the plan adopted, no amount of knowledge or power in other departments is regarded as making up for deficiency in certain prescribed subjects. Under such a system neither George Stephenson nor Brindley would have passed examination as an engineer; nor, perhaps, would even Napoleon or Wellington have been admitted to any military command. The principle, if sound, must be equally applicable to manufacturing and commercial establishments; but I have heard of none that have adopted it. Indeed a wealthy merchant lately declared, and I believe most of his brethren would agree with him, that if he had no clerks but such as were chosen for him by others his name would soon be in the 'Gazette.' I have always been of opinion that the more the appointments to the Post Office, and indeed to other public establishments, are regulated on the principles ordinarily ruling in establishments conducted by private individuals, the better it will be for the public service. The question to be decided between candidates should be, I think, simply which is best fitted for the duties to be performed, and

the decision should be left to the person immediately answerable for the right performance of the duty.*

INCIDENTS.

Telegraphs.

In the year 1852 I received (through Mr. Nicholson of Waverley Abbey) a paper drawn up by his son-in-law, Captain Galton, recommending that the Post Office should become manager of the whole telegraphic system. As the communication was private, I replied accordingly, giving, however, a favourable opinion of the project, and, of course, leaving Captain Galton to take such further steps as he should think best. I knew nothing further of this matter at the time, but have recently learnt that his plan was submitted by him to the Board of Trade, and thence referred to the Post Office, but objected to by the Postmaster-General of the day. A few years later, however, the project was revived within the office by Mr. Frederick Baines, who had at one time occupied a post of considerable importance under one of the Telegraphic Companies. This gentleman drew up an elaborate memorandum, comprising a complete plan; and this was referred by the Postmaster-General to the Treasury, but without any result at the time. I need not add that this important measure is now (1869) on the point of being carried into effect, but must regret that it should be at a cost at once so superfluous and so enormous as to make it very doubtful whether the institution can be self-supporting, and almost certain that, save at further fiscal sacrifice, correspondence by its means cannot be cheap.

* Since the above was written, the error, for such I unhesitatingly pronounce it, has been aggravated by admission into the subjects for competitive examination of some quite foreign to the business of the office; as Latin and Greek.

Packet Service.

In the year 1853 the conclusion of certain negotiations with Holland removed the last obstacle to the withdrawal of our packets to Hamburg and Rotterdam,—a measure which I had proposed long ago and which would save about 14,000*l.* a year. Notice to the contractors was given accordingly, and this with the concurrence of the Dutch Government; but, on the very eve of withdrawal, we received an intimation that consent would be withheld unless we would concede some new and objectionable points in the negotiation. This of course placed us in a difficulty, and it seemed likely that we should be compelled to make some temporary arrangement, of course at great cost. After careful consideration, however, I advised notification to the Dutch Government that, until the packets were actually withdrawn, a reduction of postage, one of the main objects of the treaty, and of which they were very desirous, must be deferred; and this expedient being adopted, there soon came a telegraphic message from the Hague announcing assent to all that we required.

Titus Oates.

One of my letters of this period refers to a curious document, discovered some time before amongst the records of the Post Office, by which it appears that the infamous Titus Oates received, after the Revolution, by way of recompense, it may be supposed, for the tremendous flagellation he had undergone a few years before, a pension of 300*l.* per annum, charged on the revenues of the Post Office. Of this document, when first discovered, I had sent a copy to Lord Macaulay, by whom it is noticed, though slightly, in his account of the period. The document,

curious in itself, is too long for insertion, but the following are extracts :—

'We [William the Third] for divers good causes and consideracõns Us hereunto moveing * * * Have given and granted by these presents * * * unto Titus Oates Doctor in Divinity his Executors Administrators and Assignes one Annuity or yearly pencõn of Three hundred pounds of lawfull English money * * * payable out of Our Revenues * * * of the General Letter Office or Post office * * * for the term of ninety nine years * * * if he the said Titus Oates and Rebecah his wife or either of them shall soe long live.'

Miscellaneous.

'*November* 22*nd*, 1852.—The returns for the last week show that the funeral of the Duke of Wellington on the 18th reduced the letters despatched from London by the evening mails of that day by about 100,000. The next day's mails were probably increased by about 10,000.'

Towards the end of 1852, a Swiss lady, residing in England as governess in a family, complained that though she had posted a letter containing a remittance to her friends at home, neither letter nor enclosure had ever been received. The direction on the letter, if I remember rightly, had been "Vevey, Canton de Vaud." Of course every inquiry was made, but this was without result; and in the office the whole matter had been forgotten. Some months afterwards the missing letter reappeared at the Dead-letter Office, when it was found that, "Switzerland" having been omitted, the letter had been sorted to Canton, and of course allotted to the China mail; by which it was now returned with the superscription—"Not known in China; try Switzerland."

Of the following incident, mentioned here for convenience, I retain no distinct recollection, though I

do not at all doubt the correctness of the statement. It is taken from an article of the 'Times' (Feb. 7th, 1868), containing an account of the Post Office, which will be found interesting, and for the most part accurate:—

'Some years since a letter came thus addressed:

"Mr. Owl O'Neil,
At the Post-office."

'The "blind man" into whose hands it fell surmised at once that it was a bit of phonetic spelling, and delivered it without hesitation to Sir Rowland Hill, its rightful owner.'

CHAPTER XI.

SOLE SECRETARYSHIP—FIRST ANNUAL REPORT, 1854.

THE statement which will be found on a subsequent page relative to improvements in hand during the last month of 1854, shows, in some measure, the increased progress consequent on the important change effected within the year. Command of the secretary's staff—many of them able officers—enabled me more rapidly to devise and mature measures of improvement, relieved me, to a great extent, from the necessity of dealing with details and from the toil of throwing my conceptions into the form of well-considered and elaborate minutes, and allowed me, when due authorization had been obtained, to carry them out without impediment or loss of time, or over-watchful care against the introduction of some thwarting modification. Provided only I could obtain the approval of the Postmaster-General, and, where needful, of the Treasury, my course henceforth would be uninterrupted so long as health of body and mind should be vouchsafed for its continuance. Of course, however, I did not expect, though such a notion seemed to be very common abroad, that the approval of the Postmaster-General and the sanction of the Treasury were to be had for mere asking; these authorities frequently having views of their own, and, though naturally paying much attention to the advice of their highest permanent officers, nevertheless

occasionally delaying or modifying action, and sometimes, though very rarely, exercising their absolute veto. All who had the pleasure of knowing Lord Canning, the Postmaster-General of the day, must be aware that he was not a man likely to act upon advice in great matters without being first convinced of its soundness; but, at the same time, they will remember that his great ability, diligence, and candour were likely to bring the means of substantial conviction within his reach. In working under such a man, though one may be sometimes subjected to delay or disappointment, there is, nevertheless, much profit, the necessity for convincing often leading to closer investigation and more careful consideration than might, at first sight, appear necessary, and occasionally tending, even where measures are perfectly sound in themselves, to more careful inquiry as to the best mode of presenting them in an acceptable form to the public. I entered now, therefore, upon the most satisfactory period of my whole official career, that in which the course of improvement was steadiest, most rapid and least chequered; the work of organization, to which I was now able to give most of my time and attention, having long been to me of all occupations the least difficult and the most pleasant; and perhaps, but for the effect of past struggles, the course now opening to me might have continued, though not without some abatement from causes to be mentioned hereafter, unto the present day.

During such a period personal history naturally loses most of its interest. For six years there was peace in the Post Office, and the history of peace, though often most important, is almost proverbially uninteresting. Quitting, therefore, for a time, that which more nearly appertains to myself, I proceed at once to describe the improvements effected or attempted within the period.

ARRANGEMENT OF SECRETARIAL DUTIES.

The private journal from which I have drawn so largely in narrating the occurrences of my official career was suspended soon after my appointment as sole secretary, partly because I now felt myself relieved from the fear of that antagonism which had rendered exact knowledge of past occurrences a matter of painful necessity, partly because I was no longer obliged to build up and maintain a claim for promotion, and partly because the full liberty now allowed for the furtherance of reform required on my part undivided attention to the device and careful consideration of measures, and of the means of carrying them into effect. Henceforward, therefore, I have for some years to depend mainly upon records of a formal and official character, and prominent among these stand the Annual Reports of the Postmaster-General, the first of which relates, so far as it is special, to the year in which I attained my final position; describing, therefore, occurrences which partly preceded, partly followed, that change. Much, however, in this First Report is naturally of a more general character.

I must premise, that one of my earliest steps on becoming sole secretary was to arrange for the meeting of the chief secretary (myself) and the two assistant-secretaries (Mr. Tilley and my brother Frederic) in frequent conference, for the consideration of measures in contemplation or in progress, and also of such suggestions on any subject as any one of the three might offer. This provision proved to be exceedingly useful. Mr. Tilley, who had been between thirty and forty years in the department, and had made good use of his opportunities, being always ready to furnish such infor-

mation relative to details as occasion might require; while my brother Frederic, who had, for seventeen years, been engaged in duties of a higher order and greater difficulty than those now devolving upon him, brought with him a mastery of general principles, a power of origination, and a habit of constantly striving for improvement, which gave him special fitness for the duty to which, indeed, he was more especially appointed, that of aiding me in the work of amelioration. This conference continued its sittings during the whole of my secretaryship; and I felt much concern, not unmixed with anxiety—subsequently but too well justified—when I learnt that on my withdrawal these were brought to an end.

In the division of duties between the assistant-secretaries I was, of course, guided by my knowledge of their respective powers, as well as by a reference to the specialty of my brother's appointment. Whatever departments required to be efficiently conducted with but moderate change in their arrangements were committed to the charge of Mr. Tilley, while those which seemed most susceptible of great improvement, with the exception of such as I retained in my own hands, were given in charge to my brother; the principal of these being the Money Order Department, already mentioned, the mail conveyance by land and by sea, and the Foreign and Colonial Department generally, including, of course, conventions with foreign countries. I need scarcely add, however, that I exercised a general control over the whole; and as the reader will be but little interested in knowing whether particular reforms owe their origin or execution to my brother or myself, I shall, save in a few more marked cases, sink individuality, and speak only of joint action. I wish, however, to state here my conviction that without my brother's able and zealous assistance the full reform

of the Post Office would not and could not have been successfully accomplished.

The heads of departments—the immediate subordinates of the secretaries—were, for the most part, men whose selection did credit to my predecessor, Colonel Maberly, on whose recommendation they had been appointed,—in short, an able staff of officers; and I took advantage of their ability to make what proved a valuable change in their mode of proceeding; for whereas the practice had been for these officers simply to select the cases requiring the judgment of the secretary, and to await his instructions before writing their minutes thereon, I gradually induced them to come prepared with an opinion of their own, which might serve in a measure for my guidance; and this soon led to a yet further improvement; for as the most commodious way of giving such opinion clearly was to throw it into the form of a minute, it became not uncommon, at least in ordinary cases, to draw the minutes, even before any reference to me —an arrangement which not only saved me much valuable time, but also procured for the matters in question a much closer investigation, and more careful consideration from those whose position was most advantageous for the task, than could be obtained without the responsibility pertaining to men called on to advise.

The Annual Reports already mentioned were intended to supply such information to the public as might tend to prevent misapprehension and avert complaint, and at the same time to describe the course of improvement.

Construction of Reports.

The Reports themselves, though always perused and often curtailed or otherwise modified by the Postmaster-General, were, from the beginning to the close of my secretariat, substantially the work of my brother Frederic, with whom indeed the plan originated, being but the application to the Post Office of a practice which he had very fully maintained during sixteen years as an Inspector of Prisons.

It must be observed that the surveyors and heads of departments were called on to supply the necessary materials by reporting each on his own division of the service; an arrangement obviously supplying an additional motive for exertion, and more especially for bringing all matters in hand to speedy completion. I fear this wholesome practice has been discontinued; certainly the late Annual Reports show no evidence of its continuance.

It may be added that in the year 1856, that is to say, within two years from our first issue, a letter was addressed by the Treasury to the other departments of the public service, calling attention to the Post Office Reports, and inviting similar reports from them, and that in the following year there appeared a First Annual Report from the Board of Customs and from the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, each containing a mass of valuable information.

I may here remark that nine years later, on my retirement from the Post Office, the management of the Report was withdrawn from my brother, and committed to other hands. It is notorious that as a general rule every man best executes his own plan; doubtless there are exceptions to the rule, but I leave it to the reader to decide by comparison whether this

be among the number. He can, at least, have no difficulty in deciding between the promptitude of issue maintained in all the earlier numbers and the monstrous irregularity which retards the Report of one year till the time is come for issuing that of the next. Any one accustomed to read the Reports regularly from the first must miss also much statistical information of considerable importance, such as the number of money orders, the number of letters in the London district, with their division into local and general, and the state of the revenue, from year to year, as compared with that before the establishment of penny postage.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT.

The first of the series was prefaced with an historical sketch of the Post Office from its origin, written by my nephew, Mr. Alfred Hill, who had recently been appointed legal arbitrator for the department. To this interesting narrative I beg to refer such of my readers as may desire to become acquainted with the early history of the department.* The whole Report will well repay the trouble of perusal. Like all similar documents, it will be found in any collection of Parliamentary papers. Here, however, I shall only quote one or two statements not previously given, and some few other passages that may interest or amuse.

In briefly describing the vast extent and ramification of postal operations, the Report states the number of officers and servants of the department within the United Kingdom as more than twenty-one thousand; and the number of post offices of all kinds as nearly ten thousand, instead of the little

* 'First Report of the Postmaster-General,' p. 7.

more than four thousand existing previously to the establishment of penny postage.

It subsequently describes the check to postal communication abroad arising out of the requirements of the Crimean war, the difficulty even of maintaining regular mail conveyance to the Black Sea, the important assistance liberally yielded by the French Government in these difficulties, and the great extent to which opportunity for correspondence was used by all ranks in the army.

Soldiers' Letters.

It had formerly been maintained, even by so high an authority as the Duke of Wellington, that British soldiers were but little disposed to make use of their long-existing privilege of penny postage; but that opinion found little confirmation at this time, since during the first eight months of the above arrangements more than three hundred and fifty thousand letters each way passed between England and the seat of war; neither did the higher rate attaching to the quicker route prevent its engrossing six-sevenths of the whole correspondence.

Colonial and Foreign Posts.

Under this head the Report deals with one of a numerous class of misapprehensions. I think I have already referred to the well-known propensity in Englishmen to make comparisons unfavourable to their own country. The simplified and reduced rate, viz., sixpence for the whole distance, had, as respects the Australian Colonies, been unfavourably contrasted with the charge of twopence-halfpenny made for conveying a letter to Australia from

the United States, whereas the American charges did not include the colonial postage, by which, even when lowest, the total was raised above our rate; and again, the American mails were despatched only by chance vessels, while the English mails were conveyed by regular packets, bound under heavy penalties to start at fixed times and to perform the voyage within a stipulated period, and therefore engaged at higher rates, the British Post Office paying threepence where the Post Office of the United States paid but one penny.

It is mentioned that the book-post was now in operation with almost every important colony, and with most of the minor ones; and that amongst other changes in foreign postage there was an important reduction in that to France, which, from a rate varying between eightpence and tenpence,—itself a very great reduction on earlier rates—had been reduced to a uniform one of fourpence: an improvement by which the postage between any place in the United Kingdom and any place in France, including even Algeria, was made as low as that charged, twenty years before, between the nearest two towns in England, and to less than the eighth part of the postage, at that earlier period, between Manchester and Lyons.

Street Nomenclature and House-numbering.

In a note to certain recommendations to the general public, remark was made on the confusion and delay in the delivery of letters arising from the application of the identical names to different streets, the extent of this practice being exemplified by the fact that in London alone there were found to be fifty King Streets, as many Queen Streets, and sixty John Streets and William Streets. In the Appendix

mention is also made of perplexities arising from irregularity in numbering, carried in some instances to such an extent as to have the same number attached to seven different houses in the same street, and in particular places exhibiting such further anomalies as would seem altogether incredible. Mr. T. B. Cooke, Inspector of Letter Carriers, who supplied the information, gives the following ludicrous instance :—

'On arriving at a house in the middle of a street, I observed a brass number 95 on the door, the houses on each side being numbered respectively 14 and 16. A woman came to the door, when I requested to be informed why 95 should appear between 14 and 16; she said it was the number of a house she formerly lived at in another street, and it (meaning the brass plate) being a very good one, she thought it would do for her present residence as well as any other.'

Unfounded Complaints.

Reference was made to serious charges brought against the Post Office without sufficient examination of antecedent facts; thus it was shown to a newspaper publisher, complaining of repeated losses, that the abstraction was really made by his own clerk; and, in another case, a more general complaint on the same subject led to the discovery, near the chief office, of a thriving mart, illicitly supplied by the private messengers employed to convey the newspapers to the post.

Rate of Improvement.

The following passage throws light on the rates of improvement :—

'On the first day of every month a report is laid before the Postmaster-General, showing the principal improvements in hand, and the stage at which each has arrived. The latest

of these reports (which is of the usual length) records one hundred and eighty-three measures, in various stages of progress, or completed, during the month of December, 1854. Minor improvements, such as extension of rural posts, &c., are not noticed in these reports.'

Railway Charges.

It has already been mentioned that railway conveyance, so cheap to the public, is dear to the Post Office; and the Report contains probably the most striking instance of augmented cost from the improved mode of conveyance :—

'In 1844 the Post Office *received* from the coach contractors about 200*l.* a year for the privilege of carrying the mail twice a day between Lancaster and Carlisle, whereas at the present time the same service performed by the railway costs the Post Office about 12,000*l.* a year.'

Early History.

In an interesting Report from Mr. Scudamore, which is given at length in the Appendix, there is a remarkable passage which shows that general views in accordance with those on which my reforms were founded were incidentally expressed, about a century and a half before, by the Postmasters-General of the day, Sir R. Cotton and Sir F. Frankland. It is as follows :—

'We have, indeed, found by experience, that where we have made the correspondence more easie and cheape, the number of letters has been thereby much increased, and therefore do believe such a settlement may be attended with a like effect in those parts [viz., a particular district].'

I cite also from Mr. Scudamore's Report the following curious passage :—

'The packets in those times, when war raged for so many

years, and when every sea was covered with French privateers, gave our Postmasters-General very great and constant anxiety. Their orders to the captains of such vessels are urgent, that they shall run while they can, fight when they can no longer run, and throw the mails overboard when fighting will no longer avail. * * * [There is] a piteous petition from James Vickers, captain of the Grace Dogger, who, as he lay in Dublin Bay waiting until the tide would take him over the bar, was seized by a French privateer, the captain of which stripped the Grace Dogger of her rigging, sails, spars, and yards, and of all the furniture "wherewith she had been provided for the due accommodation of passengers, leaving not so much as a spoone or a naile-hooke to hang anything on," and finally ransomed her to the aforesaid James Vickers for fifty guineas, which sum, with the cost of the other losses, our Postmaster-General had to pay.'

Improvement in Accounts.

A passage from the Report of the Chief Examiner shows the great improvements which had taken place in the system of accounts, and the strange laxity which had existed before the late reforms.

By this it appeared that under the old system the accounts of the provincial postmasters were usually from three to six months in arrear; that no vouchers were demanded for the proper disbursement of the money with which the postmasters were credited; that through this dilatoriness they were themselves frequently ignorant of the real state of their affairs, and under temptation to use the public money for their own purposes; while, at the same time, the revenue was injured by the delay in remitting the balances. This was contrasted with the new system, under which "each postmaster renders his account week by week, with all its proper vouchers for every receipt and every payment, and showing the revenue

left in his hands at the close of each week to be the smallest possible sum."*

At the same time, notwithstanding the "many and great struggles made to bring the accounts of the Post Office into a satisfactory state," the force in the offices of the Receiver and Accountant-General had been reduced from ninety-three to fifty-one, and that not only without any demand for extra time, but with a fair allowance of holiday to those engaged.

* 'First Annual Report,' p. 71.

CHAPTER XII.

PROGRESS OF IMPROVEMENT FROM 1855 TO 1859.

As the subsequent narrative of improvements is drawn mainly from the Annual Reports already mentioned, I have, partly for my own convenience and partly for that of such of my readers as may desire authority for my statements, made it follow, for the most part, the order of arrangement there observed.

NUMBER OF POST OFFICES, ETC.

The number of receptacles for letters in the United Kingdom, which before the establishment of penny postage was about 4,500, and which had subsequently been raised to about 10,000, was increased during the period now under consideration to more than 13,000,* thus nearly tripling the original number. Of such receptacles about 2,000 were road-side boxes—pillar-boxes, as from their frequent form they are now more commonly called; and it is to be observed that, while these cannot fulfil all the purposes of post offices, they have the important advantage of being accessible for collection at hours when receiving-houses and sub-post offices are closed; a convenience especially valuable in London, in reference to the morning mails. Their superiority in respect of economy is obvious; and this valuable quality so facilitates

* 'Sixth Annual Report of the Postmaster-General,' p. 7.

their multiplication that in London, by the close of the period, there was scarcely a house but had a posting-place within a furlong.*

Some inconvenience arose at first, and probably is still experienced in less degree, from the greater opportunity for mischief afforded by these isolated boxes, though there is some set-off in the circumstance that the most wanton or malicious act directed against them can extend no further than to the boxes and their contents; while an abominable attempt, made in the year 1859, to set fire during the night to the contents of a box at a post office—that of Devonport—besides partially effecting this detestable purpose, greatly imperilled the whole building, and even placed in jeopardy the lives of the postmaster and his family.†

BUILDING.

At various towns increase of correspondence having far outgrown the space provided for dealing with it, existing offices were enlarged or new offices erected; and though, at times, there was more or less of contest with influential corporations, naturally inclined to adorn their respective towns at the national expense, yet, so long as the matter was left in our hands, we were able, upon the whole, to effect these changes at moderate cost.

A far larger outlay than was involved in all these provincial erections and enlargements, however lavishly made, had already been staved off by my brother Frederic, who, learning soon after his appointment to the department that there was a great demand for room at the chief office (a building originally erected with far more regard to outward appearance than inward convenience, a fault found out

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 9. † Ibid. p. 7.

as work increased), and that the purchase of Smithfield had been suggested, together with the erection of an entirely new building, examined the present office from the roof to the basement, carefully considering also the plans used in its erection, and bringing to the whole matter the aid of his long experience in relation to prison buildings. He found several rooms occupied with old and useless papers, and one large apartment, in the immediate neighbourhood of others, where clerks were working, employed as a laundry; while for extinguishing fire, of which the risk was thus thoughtlessly incurred, there was not then in the whole building any provision whatever. He also found a great deal of unoccupied space available for the construction of large additional rooms. With the assistance of Mr. Gould, the intelligent clerk of the works, he recommended alterations which, being carried into effect, greatly added to the capacity of the office. At the same time, he pointed out the importance of rendering the rooms already in use practically larger by improving the ventilation, which in some parts, especially in the basement floor, was very defective; and Mr. E. Cowper, C.E., being called in for this purpose, executed the work in a most satisfactory manner.

While the danger of fire was diminished, provision was made against its incidence by the erection of tanks on the roof, with a provision of pipes, cocks, hose, and buckets, in different parts of the building, and by appointing firemen to be on duty, by relays, throughout the day and night.

In fine, the improvement in the building was so effectual, that when I resigned my post, more than twelve years afterwards, there appeared every reason to hope, especially considering the relief afforded by the district offices, that the erection of a new chief office might be indefinitely postponed; though I learn

now (1868) that such expectation is disappointed, and that land in the immediate neighbourhood has actually been purchased as an additional site.

Long before this, however, a change had been made, the benefit of which I have never been able to discover,—the construction and alteration of Post Office buildings being transferred by the Treasury, in the year 1858, from the Post Office to the Board of Works. I attempted to obtain a reversal of this order, knowing that the change by no means tended to economy; and in support of my view, I produced the following striking contrast. A new post office had lately been erected at Brighton, the cost, excluding a very moderate sum expended in fitting up a portion of it as a residence, being no more than 1,600*l.* A similar erection had now to be made at Dundee; and as the correspondence of this town is not more than about half that of Brighton, the least to be expected was that the cost here should be within the cost there; instead of which, the estimate sent in by the Board of Works raised it to four or five-fold the amount; nor could all the remonstrance I made, and I was not sparing in my representations, bring the amount lower than 5,700*l.* My general pleading availed no more than my special remonstrance, and the duty in question is still attached to the Board of Works, with what æsthetic advantages I cannot pretend to say, but certainly at a greatly increased expense.

FREE DELIVERY.

Free delivery was rapidly extending throughout the United Kingdom. At the present day (1868) the work is so far advanced that to many readers the very term "free delivery" must have lost its

significance. Formerly, to every office there were limits, sometimes narrow ones, beyond which delivery was either not made at all, or made only at an additional charge, generally of one penny per letter, an arrangement nowise interfered with by the simple establishment of penny postage. During the period now under consideration, however, in addition to much previously done, this immunity was extended to several thousand places, without counting a widening of range or other improvement at places where it already existed in an imperfect state. To indicate the extent of the benefit, it may suffice to say that at Halifax alone the new arrangement provided for the free delivery of more than 4,600 letters a week.* In short, by the end of this period free delivery was extended so far as to include ninety-three per cent. of the whole correspondence.†

LONDON DELIVERY.

While due attention was thus paid to the provinces, the department did not neglect the interests of London, whose population is one-tenth, and whose correspondence is even one-fourth of that of the United Kingdom. Much as had already been done in accelerating the delivery of letters coming into the district, we saw that additional improvements might be made to carry this acceleration still further; and as early as January, 1856, a hope was expressed, in the Report on the previous year, that the first delivery of the day throughout the metropolis might eventually be completed by nine A.M.,‡ instead of eleven, or even later. To effect this, however, and no less to obtain rapid intercommunication between the different parts of the

* 'Second Report,' p. 8. † 'Sixth Report,' p. 10.
‡ 'Second Report,' p. 10.

metropolis, required changes so complicated, that their details could not be set forth without wearying the reader. At the same time, the greatest caution and foresight were required to prevent derangement in transition; and this, combined with other difficulties, made completion slow. Briefly stated, the changes involved were as follows; and I may remark that they are almost identical with those proposed in my evidence before the Post Office Commissioners in 1837, already mentioned in this narrative.

There was to unite the two corps of letter-carriers (the impracticability of which, under divided authority, had so long delayed the whole measure); to rearrange their walks; to divide London into districts, each to be treated in some respects as a separate town; to procure suitable buildings for district offices, or, failing this, to erect such buildings, first obtaining proper sites (no easy matter); to adopt a new plan of sorting at the chief office; and last, but by no means least, to provide for the sorting of the mails according to the new districts before reaching London.*

That everything might be done with the utmost circumspection, I nominated a committee of officers to consider the details involved in the necessary changes, which committee made a very elaborate and able Report. †

In about three years from the first positive movement the district system, though still imperfect, was in some sort established throughout; and the beneficial effect had already distinctly appeared in the augmented rate of increase in the number of district letters; the annual increment rising from somewhat less than a million and a half to somewhat more than six millions and a quarter.‡ Early delivery,

* 'Second Report,' p. 10. † Ibid, pp. 9, 41. ‡ 'Fifth Report,' p. 9.

meantime, so far advanced as to bring the completion of the first round of the day nearly to the point aimed at, viz., nine A.M.* The number of deliveries, too, was raised to ten, and communication within the whole suburban district rendered much more frequent and rapid.†

These improvements had received some aid from the public in the multiplication of street-door boxes,‡ and yet more in the use of initial letters indicating districts,§ while the Metropolitan Board of Works also had somewhat amended the nomenclature of streets and the numbering of houses;‖ but on all three points very much remained then, and, I must add, remains still, to be done.

Shortly afterwards a similar system was applied to Liverpool, by which means not only the deliveries were much improved, but the cost of erecting a new chief office was avoided.¶

RAILWAY SERVICE.

Acceleration of Mails.

While these important improvements were going forward within the London district, measures were also in steady progress for improved communication

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 8.

† 'Third Report,' p. 5; 'Fourth Report,' p. 9; 'Sixth Report,' p. 9.

‡ The following extract from the 'Industrial History of Birmingham' supplies some evidence on this point:—

"The introduction of penny postage by Rowland Hill operated on this branch of trade materially [Birmingham manufactures in brass]. How it did so is strange but true. Immediately on its coming into effect came the demand for letter-weighing machines, which were made in immense quantities; and letter-box plates were introduced, made, and continue to be made, in very considerable numbers."

§ 'Sixth Report,' p. 9.

‖ 'Fourth Report,' p. 10.

¶ It appears that the district system is now (1869) introduced into Calcutta. See 'Greater Britain,' by Sir C. Dilke, vol. ii., p. 263. (Second edition).

with all parts of the United Kingdom, partly by the extended use of day mails, partly by an acceleration of speed, and partly by measures for securing greater punctuality. For the further attainment of the latter object, attempts were again made to induce the companies to enter into engagements by which they and the Post Office should be mutually bound to penalties in case of unpunctuality, coupled with rewards to the companies (though, of course, not to the Post Office) in cases of punctual performance.* In the year 1855 one company, viz., the North British, accepted this proposal, and the beneficial effect soon showed itself, the instances of irregularity being brought down in one half-year from a hundred and twelve to nine, while the company received within the same time 400*l.* in the way of reward.† Notwithstanding this result, however, the Post Office never succeeded in inducing the railway companies generally to agree to the adoption of the plan.

After a while, nevertheless, we prevailed on the companies conveying the night mail between London and Edinburgh at once to limit the ordinary traffic of the mail trains, and at the same time to effect a material acceleration.‡ Mainly by these means, the interval between London, on the one hand, and Edinburgh and Glasgow on the other—previously reduced from time to time—was brought down to less than eleven hours; and this, with other aids, enabled the department to deliver the letters at these important cities before business hours in the morning, and to despatch the return mails after business hours in the evening. To effect this improvement we had to make an *additional* payment of about 15,000*l.* a year to the railway companies alone; but the benefit was so great to Edinburgh and Glasgow

* Second Report,' p. 12. † 'Third Report,' p. 7.
‡ 'Fifth Report,' p. 11.

—indeed to the whole of Scotland—that we did not grudge the outlay.

I cannot say so much for another acceleration effected during this period, viz., that of the mails between London and Dublin; not that this was less important, but that the annual expense entailed by the change is every way greatly in excess.

The object was that the night and day mails should reach Dublin, the one in time for the first delivery of the day and for despatch onwards by the Dublin day mail, the other in time for delivery the same night and for despatch onwards by the Dublin night mail; and in order that these operations might be regular, it was obviously necessary that there should be a margin of time at Dublin to allow for occasional late arrival there.

In 1853 a committee of the House of Commons had been appointed for the purpose of reporting as to the best means of improving the service in question. The evidence of Captain Huish and other authorities connected with the existing service was to the effect that it might be greatly accelerated, and that at a not very immoderate addition to the actual cost. In consequence, the committee reported in favour of the measure,* and Government decided to give effect to their recommendation; but, when negotiations were commenced, the companies concerned, disregarding their own evidence, demanded at once more time for the trip and a higher rate of remuneration. I strongly urged resistance to both demands, and as the Postmaster-General backed my views, I have little doubt that, had the negotiations been left with the Post Office, the quicker and less costly service would have been secured; but, unfortunately, the Treasury had taken the matter into its own hands, and we were overruled; so that for insufficient ad-

* 1853, No. 747.

vantages the country has to pay an annual subsidy of upwards of 100,000*l.*, in addition to the cost—necessary, however, on either plan—of provision for sorting the letters both on the railway and on board the mail steamers.

Unfortunately, too, unpunctuality is not so rare as might be desired, the appointed penalties having been suspended on the ground of insufficient pier accommodation at Holyhead.

Still, with every drawback the improvement was important, reducing the ordinary time of the journey to eleven hours and a-half, and obtaining, so far as time was duly kept, all or nearly all the advantages aimed at—advantages extending even to Irish letters for the continental mails.*

The following extract from the Tenth Annual Report strikingly exemplifies the benefit of the change:

'Thus the period required for the transmission of a letter from London to Cork and for the receipt of a reply has been shortened in all cases by half a day, and in the great majority of cases by more than a day.'†

General Contracts.

During this period, also, many additional companies entered into general contracts, such as have already been spoken of; binding themselves, for a fixed sum per annum, not only to perform certain specified services at appointed hours and at a given speed, but to place all their trains, without exception, at the service of the department.

* 'Seventh Annual Report of the Postmaster-General,' p. 7.
† Page 18.

Need of Legislation.

Nevertheless, all that we could effect as respects railway conveyance of the mails left, and I must add still leaves, much to be desired; the law being to this day in such a state as is exceedingly injurious not only to public convenience and to economy in the Post Office, but, as I conscientiously believe, to the true interests of the companies themselves. The following instances may serve for illustration :—

Application was made to the Post Office for a day mail to Alton; and the concession was offered on condition that the London and South Western Company would consent, according to a practice established on some other lines, to carry the bag at the ordinary parcel rate, the Post Office undertaking (contrary to the usual practice in respect of parcels) to convey it to and from the stations. Our offer could hardly be considered unreasonable, seeing that the Post Office, as compared with an ordinary customer, would have to pay equally high for less service and for regular instead of occasional custom. The offer, however, was refused; the Post Office had no power to enforce the demand; and, as the correspondence would not justify the expense of a regular mail train, the desired convenience was delayed for years; the company thereby losing an increase to its parcel traffic, every penny paid for which would, in effect, have been clear profit.

In the year 1856, I received an application from Sir Cornewall Lewis, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, for such expediting of the mail to Hereford as would enable letters to reach Kington (Radnorshire), near which he resided, in time for an early morning delivery; and as the readiest means of

effecting this was by the use of the Gloucester and Hereford Railway, I applied to the company to know on what terms they would perform the duty, the distance upon their line being twenty-three miles. The answer was a very heavy demand (according to my recollection, 3,000*l.* per annum): the reason given for this enormous charge being that the line, which was ordinarily closed during the night, would have to be kept open for the special service. Though Sir Cornewall Lewis forbore to urge a demand involving so large a sacrifice, I could not but desire to attain the end, if practicable, knowing how inconvenient it must be for important official correspondence to be delayed. Taking advantage, therefore, of the clearness of the line by night, I proposed that the Post Office should itself run a train (as by law any one is entitled to do), paying, however, the appointed tolls, though legally exempted therefrom. This, however, was obviously impracticable without supplies of coal and water, and standing room for the engine and carriage, which the company alone had the means of furnishing; and for these I offered to pay according to arbitration; an offer which the company absolutely declined, though as a further inducement I had included in it the tender to the company of a carriage for passengers. Other means being sought for, it was at length suggested that Kington might be reached in sufficient time by another route, if the Shrewsbury and Hereford Company would allow the use of their line on moderate terms; and, this company agreeing to perform the duty for 1,000*l.* a year, the very circuitous route *viâ* Shrewsbury was adopted, and is still followed; the longer route involving no inconvenience, as the conveyance is effected in the night.

Again, the importance of some definite rule of

charge for specific duty, even as a means of facilitating improvement, is shown by reference to the multiplicity of contracts sometimes requiring to be made or modified before a change can be completed. The following is from the Report of 1859:—

'The great number of arrangements still necessary for the conveyance of letters to long distances, notwithstanding the length of many of the railways for which a single contract suffices, is shown by the fact, that for the transmission of a letter from Land's End to John O'Groat's—exclusive of engagements with rural messengers, and of arrangements for the conveyance of mail-bags between railway stations and post offices—twenty-one separate contracts are required.'*

Conciliatory Devices—Loans.

In my anxiety to place our relations with the Railway Companies on a satisfactory footing, and amidst doubt as to success in any attempt to procure efficient legislation on the subject, I devised, in the beginning of 1857, what I hoped might prove a means of winning from the companies that which, in spite of what I believed and still believe to be their true interests, they have almost all refused to concede.

My plan was that Government should, on ample security and to a limited extent, advance loans, on the terms on which it could itself borrow, to such companies as were willing to adopt a reasonable tariff of charge for postal services; an arrangement which, while costing in effect nothing to Government, would enable the companies to borrow at a rate much lower than ordinary. As I still consider this suggestion important, I give my memorandum on the subject at length in the Appendix (J.). I may state here that I proposed

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 12.

to make the arrangement terminable at the end of three years, and that I hoped to reduce our annual payments for railway service by about 250,000*l.*

An inquiry from the Duke of Argyll, then Postmaster-General, led me to add a representation, setting forth strong additional reasons for seeking to obtain, of course on equitable terms, unlimited use of the railways. The following is the most emphatic passage:—

> I feel assured that, if my plan of advances to the railway companies were adopted, there would be no *financial* difficulty, either in using, more or less, every railway now existing, or which may be hereafter constructed, or in extending the delivery of letters to every house in the United Kingdom.

My memorandum was sent by the Duke of Argyll to the Treasury, with a somewhat guarded recommendation that it should be favourably considered.

By his permission I also laid it before Mr. Hutchinson, chairman of the Stock Exchange, who, with some valuable recommendations as to the best mode of giving it effect, expressed his entire approbation of the plan; and this being reported in a second memorandum, the whole matter was referred by the Treasury to Sir Alexander Spearman, though with what result I do not know.

Meanwhile His Grace suggested that I should obtain also the opinion of Mr. Gladstone, who, it must be remembered, was not then in the Government, having seceded on a question relative to the Russian war; and on this advice, with the ready permission of Sir G. Cornewall Lewis, Mr. Gladstone's successor in office, I was only too happy to act. The result, which, however, I first communicated to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I subsequently stated in the following letter to the Postmaster-General.

The reader will here see something of the practical

difficulties which even Government, after giving its approbation to a measure, has to apprehend in carrying it, however cautiously, through Parliament:—

'February 23rd, 1857.

'My dear Lord Duke,

'Mr. Gladstone is of opinion that the Post Office interests in connection with the railways have been greatly neglected by the Legislature; that the Government should, if possible, obtain possession of the railways, when all difficulty would, of course, cease; that this might have been done seven or eight years ago, but that now it would be very difficult, and that some other course must in all probability be resorted to.

'He likes my plan (though inferior, as being less direct than the other), but considers it too difficult a piece of legislation for Parliament as matters now stand, and advises that, with the consent of the Treasury, we should endeavour to make the arrangement with some one company subject to the confirmation by Parliament, which, for a single bargain, might, he thinks, be counted upon; and that having done this we should, if the results prove satisfactory, apply to Parliament for power to deal with other companies.

'He also thinks well of referring the whole question, including the Bill, to a committee of the House of Commons, *provided some able member of the Government can spare time to manage the case;* but not otherwise.

'Sir George Cornewall Lewis is inclined to the latter alternative; but the difficulty will be to spare Mr. Wilson or any other able man to attend the committee. He spoke of Mr. Lowe, and promised to consider the whole case.

'Faithfully yours,

'Rowland Hill.

'His Grace the Duke of Argyll.'

While this matter remained under consideration at the Treasury, or, in other words, was forgotten amidst the demands of more pressing business, another attempt was made at general legislation, as will hereafter appear, but still without success; and in the beginning of 1858 I again called the Postmaster-

General's attention to the subject. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had suggested, meantime, that Government, instead of lending money, as I had originally proposed, or Consols, according to Mr. Hutchinson's judicious modification, might yield the necessary aid by giving its guarantee for loans to be raised by the companies themselves; but this suggestion had been condemned by Mr. Hutchinson, as far less beneficial to the companies, and as raising what would be felt as an injurious distinction between loan and loan, *i.e.*, guaranteed and unguaranteed. The matter was now referred by the Treasury to the Board of Trade, then presided over by Lord Stanley of Alderley, who called for the opinion of the Secretary, Mr. Booth, which was in effect adverse. I had also, with permission, consulted Mr. Locke, the eminent engineer, then M.P. for Honiton; who, however, though approving of the principle, demanded that it should be carried out to its full extent, so as not merely to cover 30,000,000*l.*, as I had proposed, but to include loans generally. He also required a further amalgamation of companies, and what it may be remembered I had previously urged, but in vain, viz., the concession to each great company of a district or territory, into which other companies should, except in specified contingencies, be forbidden to intrude. In fine, through excessive caution on the one hand, and excessive demands on the other, combined with the ordinary difficulties attending innovation, nothing was done.

Ten years have now elapsed since my attempt was abandoned, but my estimate of its value remains undiminished; I see no intrinsic difficulty in the plan, no counterbalancing evil to its benefit, nor any obstacle to its adoption, but the want of a more general and accurate knowledge on the subject; for lack of this, supposing my view to be correct, Go-

vernment has been and still is constantly expending a quarter of a million more than necessary, the railway companies are deprived of a valuable relief, and the postal service is cramped to a degree seriously affecting the interests of the public at large.

Attempts to procure Legislation.

My attempt the same year (1857) to obtain satisfactory legislation was not more successful than my previous efforts. The bill was prepared with every just consideration for railway interests, which, indeed, I was little likely to neglect, but was introduced too late in the session to give it any chance of passing against the opposition which, to my great disappointment, it encountered.* Two years later, thinking I had found a favourable conjuncture, I proposed a measure on new terms, which I hoped would prove more acceptable; and a bill being drawn accordingly at the Post Office, with the sanction of the Treasury, I hoped that it would be introduced early in the session of 1860; but, before the time arrived, my increasing illness took so serious a form that many months elapsed before I was able to do work of any kind; and, in short, my direct attempts to obtain railway legislation here came to an end.

To what form the relation between the Post Office and the railways will eventually be brought, by legislation or otherwise, must for the present remain matter of conjecture. The purchase of the whole railway system by the State has of late been much talked of; and, of course, if this should be effected, all such legislation as I sought to procure would be

* 'Fourth Annual Report,' p. 13. The bill *in extenso*, with explanatory remarks thereon, will be found at p. 46 of the same Report.

superseded; but the difficulties to be surmounted are very great. Reference has been made to a Royal Commission on Railways, of which I was a member. This was appointed in 1865, and I joined it at the earnest request of Mr. Gladstone. Though unable, through the state of my health, to attend all the meetings, I was careful to examine the report of all such evidence as I did not hear, and both evidence and discussion confirmed the opinions I had previously formed on the subject. These had in the main been put forth some time before by my brother Frederic, who also frequently discussed them with me in conversation, and finally gave them concise but distinct expression in his evidence before the Commission. I may add that our joint view was supported by valuable evidence from Mr. Edward Page, Inspector-General of Mails, and Mr. Gregory, C.E., the Arbitrator for the Post Office, and afterwards President of the Society of Engineers.

Adopting the suggestion of Government purchase (originally made, I believe, by Mr. Galt, as early as the year 1844), but differing from him as to the mode of proceeding, my brother recommended that the purchase should be made gradually; and this not by compulsion, save in a few exceptional cases, but by free covenant between the railway proprietors and the Government; that the purchase should be effected, not by any increase of the National Debt, but on some such arrangement as is now generally adopted when one company becomes possessed of the line of another; lastly, that Government should not attempt to work the railways itself, but lease them out to companies or individuals on such conditions as would most tend to public benefit.

These views will be found expressed in my separate Report (for I did not succeed in bringing over my

brother Commissioners to my opinion) at pp. CXII. and CXXVI.*

It is foreign to the purpose of this narrative to dwell on the general advantages that might be expected to follow the great change in question; suffice it to repeat that, if effected, it would put it in the power of Government to secure to the Post Office the prompt and unimpeded command of all railway facilities, and that on terms at once equitable in themselves and beneficial to all parties.

Arbitration with Railway Companies.

In the absence of those fixed rules which legislation alone can establish, frequent recourse is necessarily had to arbitration; which, however, is unsatisfactory in its results, owing, no doubt, chiefly to the difficulty of procuring an umpire at once sufficiently conversant with the facts and principles that should form the basis of judgment, sufficiently unbiassed to deal with them dispassionately, and at the same time acceptable to the railway companies. In cases of difference between individuals and large companies, the public feeling, as shown by the decision of juries and otherwise, is for the most part unduly favourable towards individuals; and, in like manner, in cases between companies and that largest of corporations the State, the feeling is unduly favourable to the companies; a difference augmented by the fact that the companies can address *ex-parte* statements to the public, while even the highest fixed officers in any Government department are bound by official etiquette to silence.

Further indication as to the true interest of railway companies in relation to the Post Office will be found in the following passage:

It may be remembered that, when chairman of

* Royal Commission on Railways. Report of the Commissioners, 1867.

the Brighton Railway Company, I had induced the directors to offer to the Post Office the almost gratuitous conveyance of an additional mail by every train between London and Brighton not already retained for postal service, and that this offer had been in part accepted. In the beginning of 1859, however, I learnt that the company, then under the chairmanship of Mr. Schuster, demanded payment for this additional service. Sincerely believing the demand to be contrary to the company's true interests, I wrote to the directors in earnest deprecation. I give the essential part of my letter:—

'15th February, 1859.

'My dear Sir,

* * * * * *

'I trust, however, that you will not lightly disturb the existing arrangements. You are mistaken as to the motives which induced the board, at the time I had the honour of being their chairman, to undertake the conveyance of the mails between London and Brighton at the present rates of charge. Our motive was not so much the benefit of the Post Office as that of the railway company; and the result of fourteen years' experience clearly establishes, I think, the policy of the measure.

'Beyond the limits of the London District there is no town in England which has equal postal facilities with Brighton; and the board will, I think, on reconsideration, agree with me in opinion that no inconsiderable part of the 20,000*l.* a year obtained from the sale of season tickets is attributable to this cause.

'Any attempt to raise the charge upon us would necessarily lead to a diminution of service; and, in this way, the company as well as the public would suffer.

'As a shareholder, I am anxious on this point. * * *'

The consequence, I am happy to say, was the abandonment of the demand, and the maintenance of the previous practice; which, I understand, remains unchanged to the present time (1868).

NUMBER OF LETTERS.

The increase in the number of chargeable letters delivered in the United Kingdom was from 443 millions in 1854* to 545 millions in 1859;† *i. e.*, from somewhat less than six-fold of the number previously to the establishment of penny postage to somewhat more than seven-fold; so that the mere increment during these five years far exceeds the total amount under the old rates; the one being 102 millions and the other only 76 millions.

Returned Letters.

In the Report for 1855 there is striking information as to reduction in the proportion of returned, missent, and redirected letters following the establishment of penny postage. In the year 1838 the postage so lost amounted to $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on the gross postal revenue of Great Britain. In three years it had fallen to $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., in eleven years more to 1 per cent., in three years more to $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent;‡ and the proportion seems afterwards to have fallen still lower.§

Envelopes.

The use of envelopes, it may be observed, which under the old system was in effect limited to franked letters, had by this time become so general, that though of letters from abroad about 30 per cent. were still written on single sheets, such exception in the case of inland letters was in 1858 as low as 3 per cent., and is, probably, now still lower.‖ The amount of general convenience resulting from the change it would not be easy to estimate.

* 'First Report,' p. 22. † 'Sixth Report,' p. 14.
‡ 'Second Report,' p. 18. § 'Sixth Report,' p. 15.
‖ 'Fifth Report,' p. 16.

REGISTRATION.

The proportion of registered letters, too, which under the original high charge had been comparatively small, was now steadily advancing; the Fourth Annual Report showing that in the year 1857 it was as high as one out of 400.* In the year 1868 it was as high as one out of 333.

The general adoption of registration, however, was, and probably still is, somewhat retarded by the fear that, as the very fact of registration indicates value, which might otherwise remain unobserved, its use tends rather to create danger than to diminish it. This objection is sufficiently disposed of by a statement in the Sixth Annual Report, by which it appears that of the 1,400,000 letters registered within the year, only 785, or one in about 1750, were reported as not having reached their destination. Further, that all these except 15 were afterwards recovered; and that of eight, out of this small exceptional number, the loss had occurred after they had left the custody of the British office.†

In contrast with this it may be mentioned that in the same year (1859) no less than 260*l.* found in unregistered letters remained in the hands of the Post Office simply from the want of means to find out either the addressee or the sender.‡

Such negligence in remitting money is the more blameable because, as remarked in the Postmaster-General's Third Report, it offers temptations to theft which often prove irresistible, "bringing many a man in the service of the Post Office to disgrace and ruin, who, but for the thoughtlessness or parsimony of others, might have remained an honest and useful member of society."§

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 17.
† 'Sixth Report,' p. 15.
‡ 'Sixth Report,' p. 15.
§ 'Third Report,' p. 30.

As if this were not quite enough, a cry was raised that the dishonesty really due to this blameable conduct on the part of individuals was attributable to parsimony in the department; the allegation being that men were driven to depredation through scantiness of pay; an hypothesis quite untenable, as will be shown hereafter.

MONEY ORDERS.

Number of Money Order Offices.

This department, under the secretarial direction of my brother Frederic, and the able management of Mr. Jackson, the head of the Money Order Office, continued to make steady progress throughout the period. The number of offices in the United Kingdom was increased from somewhat less than 1,900* to nearly 2,500;† while, as will hereafter appear, the system had been extended to several of our dependencies. In London, which, of course, furnished a very large proportion of the whole business, offices were so multiplied as to enable almost every resident to find one within a quarter of a mile of his dwelling.‡

Increase in Amount and Profit.

The amount annually transmitted, which before the establishment of penny postage had been less than one third of a million, but in the fourteen following years had risen to nearly ten millions, rose during this period to more than thirteen millions; and the profit, which had been gradually substituted for a loss, and had risen by 1854 to somewhat more than 16,000*l.*, rose by the end of the period to more than 29,000*l.*§

One cause of increase, in both amount and profit,

* 'First Report,' p. 23.
† 'Sixth Report,' p. 16.
‡ p. 9.
§ p. 17.

was greater simplicity of proceeding, arising from the gradual relaxation of rules found to be unnecessarily strict, and the substitution of practical safeguards for others more cumbrous and less effectual; changes which happily, while much reducing the labour of the clerks, and in effect ameliorating their condition, seem not to have led to a single attempt at fraud.*

At the same time, where through carelessness on the part of applicants an issued money order had to be altered, an extra charge was established in compensation for the trouble; and this trifling source yielded in 1857 about 800*l.* per annum.

In effecting a simplification of accounts, valuable assistance was derived from the suggestions of Mr. Hoffay, a member of the Treasury committee which reported on the Post Office in 1854, and also from a departmental committee, consisting of Messrs. Scudamore, Parkhurst and Jackson, appointed, at Mr. Tilley's suggestion, in 1859; which, in addition to its own devices and those of Mr. Hoffay, recommended a useful improvement suggested by Mr. West.†

Obstacles to Economy.

Further economy, to the extent of about 1000*l.* a year, might have been effected by the adoption of an arrangement prepared by my brother for farming out what is called "the window duty" (that is the direct transaction of ordinary post office business with the public) at the chief money order office, on a plan already in very general use elsewhere; but, though this was recommended to three several Postmasters-General, its adoption was not obtained. Success would have led to a great extension of the recommendation; our joint

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 17. † p. 17.

conviction being that all the duties of postmasters and their subordinates, together with much other business of the department, might be most economically and effectually performed under a system of contracts. At the same time the obstacle to the change was then, as now, far from inconsiderable; the manifest effect being to diminish, in proportion to its extent, the amount of that patronage on which every Administration counts as a means of influence. It must not be forgotten, indeed, that the Liberal Administration under the Earl of Aberdeen made a very handsome sacrifice of patronage, in relation to the appointment of provincial postmasters; and there is ground for believing that this change, instead of being disliked by Members of Parliament, had from most a hearty approval; relieving them as it did, so far, from the importunities of place-hunting constituents. At the same time, it must be admitted that until there be a more general enlightenment in the public itself, combined with a more resolute discontinuance of everything like corrupt practice, it will be difficult for any administration, however liberal, to take those bold steps which alone can put the public service on a sound footing.

With regard to the economic tendency of the plan of contracts, I do not think it would be an oversanguine estimate to fix the annual saving of public money to be ultimately derived from its full adoption and careful administration, in the Post Office alone, at a quarter of a million sterling.

Soldiers' Remittances.

During the time of the Russian war the money order system was carried into active operation amongst our forces serving in the East; who, in

the course of the year 1856, sent home by this means more than 100,000*l.**

Increased Facilities.

It was in this period that the maximum amount for a single money order was raised from 5*l.* to 10*l.*,† an improvement long urged; that opportunity was given for converting, at an almost nominal charge, a money order into what was in effect a bill payable ten days after date; and that, to facilitate small remittances, postage stamps were made exchangeable for money at a low commission, on application at a post office.‡

Extension to Colonies.

In the year 1857, after overcoming many difficulties, a plan was devised for establishing a money order system between the mother country and the colonies. In fear of opposition on the ground of interference with private enterprise, the plan was arranged with a view to remove objections previously regarded as insuperable on the part of bankers, and succeeded in obtaining the acquiescence of those most likely to be affected by the change. The consent first of the Postmaster-General (Lord Colchester), and afterwards of the Treasury, was obtained; but when the arrangement was about to come into operation the Treasury sanction was suspended, on that very allegation of interference which it was hoped had been provided against. In 1859, however, taking advantage of an application on the subject from the Canadian Post Office, these views were again urged, and, with Lord Colchester's approval, ap-

* 'Third Report,' p. 12. † 'Sixth Report,' p. 17. ‡ p. 18.

plication was again made to the Treasury, which, after some hesitation, agreed to try the experiment. It is only necessary to add that the trial proved so successful that money order communication was gradually extended to all the other colonies, and some foreign countries.

COLONIAL POSTS.

That reduction of rates between Britain and her colonies which had already been carried to a considerable extent was during this period made complete, the sixpenny rate being universally established in the year 1857.* It is true, indeed, that in the interest of tax-payers, alike domestic and colonial, the maximum rate to our most distant possessions had afterwards to be increased; but wherever this was done a rate yet lower than the sixpenny one was established for all letters sent by ordinary ship; so that the letters of the humbler classes, and indeed such other portion of the general correspondence as is under no stress of time, are conveyed on lower terms than ever.

Intra-colonial Rates.

By returns obtained from the colonies during the year 1856, it appeared that reduction of rate was universal, or very nearly so, and uniformity of charge almost as general. The lowest rate reported was that in India, where the minimum charge was, and still is, for all distances, as low as three farthings; and though the weight thereby covered is certainly very small—being only about one-tenth of an ounce—yet on the one hand such restriction appears to pro-

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 20.

duce little or no inconvenience to natives, and on the other there is more than a counterbalance for it in the vast extent of country over which a letter may be conveyed. The new postal system, which involved in effect the complete adoption of my plan, was established on the recommendation of a Commission of Inquiry, which, in the year 1852, issued an able report containing, amongst other matters, curious information as to ingenious contrivances practised by the natives for evading the old rates of postage. I have lately learnt (1870) with great satisfaction, that, whereas before the change, the Indian Post Office was a source of expense, it is now self-supporting. In many of the colonies the single letter rate was, as in England, one penny; in some, however, as high as fourpence; in a few the postage still varied according to distance, the highest range being that on the Gold Coast, viz., from sixpence to one shilling.

Colonial Book-posts.

By the end of 1857, all the colonies had a book-post with the mother country, and to a certain extent this communication had been made inter-colonial.*

Transference of Management.

As it had been found difficult, or rather impracticable, for the Postmaster-General effectually to superintend postal affairs in distant colonies, measures were taken in the year 1859—though they could not be completed until the next year—for transferring to the different Colonial Governments in the West Indies (unfortunately, in the case of Jamaica at least, much against their will) the management of

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 20.

their respective offices. Of course such transfer, following as it did a similar change with regard to all our North American colonies, materially reduced the amount of our revenue, the counterbalancing advantage being the benefits usually arising from autonomy.

FOREIGN POSTS.

France.

The reduction of postage between England and France, already mentioned, which extended to the transit rates charged in each country on the letters of the other, having been followed by a large increase of correspondence, further changes were considered desirable,* and in the year 1856 my brother Frederic was sent to Paris to negotiate (of course in communication with the English ambassador) with the French Office. The result of the proceedings was the completion of a new postal convention involving large mutual reduction in transit rates and sea postage, an important clause being inserted which empowered the two Offices, by mutual agreement, to make future alterations in most of the provisions of the convention without the delay and formality of ordinary diplomatic action; and this important provision, being one on which great stress was justly laid, was carefully included, when practicable, in subsequent treaties with whatever power.

Other European Countries.

New postal conventions, having for their object a reduction and simplification of charges, were in the same year (1856) in progress with Belgium, the German Postal Union, and Spain; but even with the

* 'Third Report,' p. 15.

first of these powers negotiation advanced but slowly; with the other two progress was slower still; while all attempts with Portugal, even to obtain reduction in the excessive rate then charged to Madeira, viz., one shilling and tenpence the quarter ounce, with an additional charge on delivery, a matter of no small importance to many English families, were for the time fruitless.* Indeed, so sluggish were the movements of this power, that no new convention had been effected with it, and consequently no postal improvement made (save in marine transit), for fifty years. Two years later, however, through the efforts of the British ministers at Madrid and Lisbon, aided by Mr. Edward Rea, who had been despatched by the Postmaster-General for the express purpose, better postal treaties with Spain and Portugal were at length concluded.†

A year later still, a limited improvement was effected with most of the States in the German Postal Union; the single-letter rate being reduced from eightpence to sixpence; the transit rates, however, remaining as high as before, and the offer of a book-post being not yet accepted.‡

United States.

Arrangements were also made for the registration of letters between this country and the United States;§ but on other points of far more importance negotiations with that country made no effective progress during the period now under review. Our proposals made in 1856, which involved a reduction in the letter postage from a shilling the half-ounce to sixpence, the establishment of a book-post, and the adoption of low transit rates on terms more favour-

* 'Third Report,' p. 17.
† 'Fifth Report,' p. 19.
‡ 'Sixth Report,' p. 19.
§ 'Third Report,' p. 18.

able to the United States than were required by simple equity, were met by a counter-proposal, which, not being regarded as satisfactory, was replied to with a full statement of objections; an offer being made at the same time to submit the whole matter, if needful, to the arbitration of a third party. Instead, however, of making any rejoinder to this, the American Postmaster-General, in his next Annual Report, while entirely passing over the offer of arbitration, represented England as acting so unsatisfactorily, "that for the present no disposition is felt to pursue the matter further."* Any one wishing to satisfy himself as to the respective merits of the parties in this proceeding will find the necessary documents in the Appendix to the Sixth Report of the British Postmaster-General, p. 57.

Before the English rejoinder could be made, however, the misrepresentations so boldly put forth raised an outcry in America, which was partly echoed here. Error in this country, so far as it went, was likely to disappear, or at least to become harmless, as soon as the next Annual Report came out; but in America, correction, if left to ordinary means, would doubtless have been found very slow. Fortunately, as might be expected in so energetic a nation, the need called forth the man: and so much as one man could do for diffusing sound knowledge on the whole subject was done by the late Mr. Pliny Miles; who, in his zeal for postal reform—a zeal, I must remark, rarely leading him into any inaccuracy—published more on the general subject in America than ever I did in England, travelled widely also in the Union, to urge his views by word of mouth, and several times crossed the Atlantic for the furtherance of his object. I must forestal events so far as to add that, long as he had to labour, and often as he endured disappointment,

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 20.

he happily lived to see his efforts rewarded with a large measure of success.*

I must also so far anticipate here as to express the pleasure with which I have heard during late years of a total change in the spirit of the American Post Office, the new authorities of which have, I am informed, shown the utmost readiness to concur frankly in any measure of improvement, and an honourable desire to form arrangements equitable to both parties.

Other Non-European Countries.

In the year 1857, besides conventions with some of the States of Central and South America, a postal treaty was concluded with the small, but interesting, and in a certain sense important Republic of Liberia.†

Treaties made easily Terminable.

As much inconvenience had arisen from past treaties having been made generally for long periods, so that, in case of disagreement as to interpretation on any point, or of serious modification being found needful, nothing could be done save by the slow and cumbrous process of diplomacy through the Foreign Office, a clause was inserted in all these new conventions, in accordance with a general rule previously

* Since the above was written a passage, though an erroneous one, in an interesting and popular work, has reminded me of another American labourer in the field of postal improvement. One of Miss Mitford's letters would seem to show that as early as 1832, or four years before my pamphlet was written, she went to hear Mr. Elihu Burritt lecture on ocean penny postage. A letter lately received from Mr. Burritt informs me that he never visited England before 1846, and never worked in the cause of postal reform but in sequence to myself. Explanation of the error may easily be found by reference to the difficulty which must have been encountered in piecing together, with even plausible correctness, the scraps of paper on which Miss Mitford's letters were habitually written.

† 'Fourth Report,' p. 24.

laid down, whereby they were made terminable by either party at moderate notice.

PACKET SERVICE.

Post Office versus *Admiralty.*

As the packet service remained during the whole of this period in the hands of the Admiralty, the action of the Post Office upon it was necessarily indirect and limited; as is strikingly exemplified by the fact that in the year 1857 the contract with the West Indian Packet Company was renewed not only without my knowledge, but without that even of the Postmaster-General, the Duke of Argyll. The inconvenience of such a course appeared distinctly enough two years later when Mr. Anthony Trollope, being sent out to the West Indies on other business—which he managed with success—was able, although a landsman, to propose a scheme of routes for the mail-packet at once more convenient and more economical than the existing routes, and, in the opinion of the hydrographer to the Admiralty, superior to them even in a nautical point of view, but which nevertheless had to wait long for adoption, because no satisfactory arrangement could be made with the directors of the company; and their renewed contract had yet four years to run.*

Moreover, the omission to introduce into the renewed contract efficient stipulations on the score of punctuality led to its natural consequence; some of the packets worked by this company, viz., those between St. Thomas, Colon, and Greytown, being the least punctual in all the mail-packet service; while the most punctual were those between Devonport and the Cape of Good Hope, belonging to the

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 27.

Union Steamship Company, into whose contract such stipulations had been introduced in their strongest form, and which succeeded in the year 1859 in making every one of its voyages within the appointed time.*

In another case the Post Office was indeed consulted, but for political reasons its opinion was overruled. A subsidy was granted to a company which undertook to run a line of mail-packets from Galway to ports in the United States.† I scarcely need remind the reader that this enterprise proved abortive and disastrous.

Indian Mutiny.

It may well be supposed, however, that during the critical period of the Indian mutiny, when all thoughts were directed to one great end, and when the rapid conveyance of intelligence was of the utmost importance, the Post Office, so far from being left unconsulted, was called on, not less from within than from without, for every effort that could be made. The most important postal improvement on the occasion is described at some length in the Fourth Annual Report, p. 20. It may suffice here to say that, after careful examination of the packet service as it stood, we discovered the means of doubling the number of mails to Calcutta and Madras (then two per month), with but moderate change of existing arrangements, and at comparatively small additional expense. After due consideration I wrote (Sept. 12th, 1857) to the chairman of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, informing him of our plan, and inviting him to a conference on the subject. I also wrote (Sept. 16th) to Mr. Wilson, then Secretary to the Treasury, to mention what we had done, and to

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 30. † p. 21.

advise the postponement of all other negotiations for the same purpose. Little time was lost in the matter, the company thankfully adopting our recommendation, and the new arrangement being at once approved by the Treasury; and thus was obtained, at the annual cost of 16,000*l.*, a duplication of service, which but for the expedient employed would scarcely have been procured at the rate of 100,000*l.*

Every effort was also made, even at considerable expense, to shorten the time between London and Paris; and by the cordial assistance of the French Post Office, and the zealous co-operation of the directors of the English and French railway companies, this was frequently brought within nine hours;* an abridgment not easy, perhaps, even now in 1868, but certainly very difficult in 1857.

Transit through Egypt was still rather slow, and it was not till the next year (1858) that it was accelerated by the completion of the railway between Alexandria and Suez.†

The general result of our efforts during the Indian troubles was briefly stated in a letter to Lord Canning, which I give in the Appendix (K), as it may now perhaps be considered as deriving some historic value from the crisis during which it was written, and the almost martyred statesman to whom it was addressed.

Consequences of Deviation from Principle.

Had the sacrifices involved in the above-mentioned proceedings been limited to such occasions as the Indian mutiny and the Russian war, they would naturally have been looked upon as special, and would therefore have established no inconvenient precedent; but the concession to the West Indies having no specialty about it, was obviously, if jus-

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 22. † 'Fifth Report,' p. 17.

tifiable there, equally claimable elsewhere. The fact is, as already intimated, that the West Indian packet service was established not for postal, but for political purposes, and the term Royal mail-packets was a misnomer, which, while it could not blind our neighbours, tended much, as has already been shown, to mystify ourselves. The chief effect at this period was that other colonies, less favoured hitherto, began to put in claims to which, under the circumstances, there was no ostensible reply; those of Australia, then rapidly rising in importance through the discovery of their gold fields, naturally taking the lead. In the consideration of this matter the Post Office was called on to take a part, and it was at length laid down that a monthly line of steamers in each direction should be maintained, half the very heavy expense to be defrayed by the mother country, and the other half by the colonies conjointly; the several contributions of these latter to be proportionate to their respective amounts of correspondence and the distance performed in their respective services.

South Australia, indeed, refused at first to bear any part of this expense, save on conditions which were quite inadmissible; but, as the Home Government stood firm, its resistance was eventually abandoned.

Panama route to Australia.

Another controversy relative to the Australian service was as follows:—

About the year 1857 a demand arose in this country for sending the Australian mails by way of Panama, a line of steamers across the Pacific having been projected, and the projectors hoping to divert a portion of the mail service to that route, which of course it became their interest to extol above all

others. Their recommendation was based on two alleged advantages; first, that the new route was the shortest, and second, that its adoption in addition to the existing communication would turn the monthly mail into a bi-monthly one. The comparative shortness of the route seemed to be received by the public as a fact too obvious to admit of question; and as it was in connection with this route that the suggestion of an intermediate mail was originally made, the two projects became so associated in the popular mind, that the adoption of the one seemed essential to the establishment of the other. Besides the new company, there were other parties interested in the plan, viz., the colonies of New Zealand and New South Wales, which, lying eastward of the other Australian settlements, would, by the proposed arrangement, receive their mails earlier than their neighbours; thus obtaining whatever advantage attaches to priority of information; and these colonies doubtless urged upon their friends in England agitation in favour of the new route. Be this as it may, the demand was strongly backed at home, some of the newspapers becoming quite clamorous for the change, the Government being strongly pressed for immediate action, and all hesitation denounced as imbecility or red-tapeism. It really seemed as if globes, maps, and gazetteers were unknown or inaccessible, and common sense fast asleep. The outcry increasing in volume and intensity, Government at length expressed its intention to call for tenders. The universality of the delusion was curiously exemplified by the following incident. Happening to meet at the Athenæum a friend, who had long held an important office in the far East, almost on the shores of the Pacific, a man of great acquirements and extended information, I was at once challenged with the inquiry of the day, "Why do

you not establish an Australian mail by the Panama route?" and upon putting the counter-question, "Why should we?" was promptly answered, "Because it is the shortest." I proposed that we should forthwith submit this allegation to the test of measurement, and, obtaining a piece of string, we repaired to the large globe in the drawing-room, where a few moments settled the question. So far as I was able to analyse the popular error, it consisted mainly in practical ignorance as to the enormous breadth of the Pacific Ocean.

Of course it was not sufficient to convince private friends; my business being to act upon Government, which seemed to be upon the point of incurring a very large and very useless expense. I accordingly wrote an elaborate report on the subject, which, as the project may some day be revived, I give in the Appendix (L). This, being backed by Lord Colchester, was sent to the Treasury, and the plan was given up. A line of steamers across the Pacific was, indeed, afterwards established by a special company subsidised by the New Zealand Government, and to this were of course consigned the mails to New Zealand, and such other letters, &c., as were specifically directed for conveyance by that route. The enterprise, however, was the reverse of profitable, and has at length been abandoned.

Peninsular and Oriental Company.

It must be added that, in the year 1858, the conveyance of the Australian mails by the usual route was transferred, with no small public benefit, to the Peninsular and Oriental Company,* by which it has ever since been performed in a very creditable manner, a high speed having been maintained, so

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 17.

as to bring the time to Melbourne *viâ* Marseilles below fifty days, together with a punctuality which, considering the vast distance to be traversed, is extraordinary.

This remarkable regularity, however, while proceeding in great measure from the excellent management of the company, is, in this case, as in several others, due in part to the gradual introduction of that system of fines and rewards* to which we so long strove, almost in vain, to induce railway companies to consent.

Egyptian Railway.

In the year 1858 the completion of the railway between Alexandria and Suez, already mentioned, and a new agreement with the Pacha gave much greater expedition to the mails through Egypt, which was also facilitated by other arrangements. Much valuable aid in effecting the whole improvement was afforded by Mr. Anthony Trollope, sent, for these and other purposes, on a special mission to the Mediterranean;† and further improvements were due in great measure to Mr. William Page, who went out the following year (1859) on a similar mission ‡

Mail to China.

It only remains to be added that, in the year 1857, the service to China, previously monthly, was made bi-monthly; and that during the period under review the mail-packet service was extended or increased in various other quarters.

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 22. † 'Fifth Report,' p. 18.
‡ 'Sixth Report,' p. 28.

ACCELERATION OF NEWS.

In addition to the measures taken for accelerating the mails, efforts were made to increase, as much as possible, postal facilities to the public journals. I had previously made various arrangements for this general purpose, but the universal demand for early intelligence at the time of the Indian mutiny led us to seek further improvement.

The mode of proceeding, when application was made to me on the subject, was, so far as I remember, for the managers of the morning journals to send a special messenger to Marseilles to receive there such part of the mail as pertained to them. On arriving at Boulogne the messenger took this on board a steamer specially hired for the purpose, and immediately upon reaching Dover handed it over to writers sent down from London, who returned to town by a special train, making their abstracts and extracts by the way. The proceeding on this side Dover may, for aught I know, remain unaltered to the present time; but, with some trouble, I devised and established such an arrangement as dispensed with the special messenger to Marseilles, and that in such manner as to avoid the delay which had led to the employment of the special steamer; so that, thenceforth, without trouble or expense to the journalists, their despatches were received at Dover at least as early as before, the saving to each paper being, as I was informed by the editor of one, no less than about 2,000*l.* per annum.

About the same time, we revived also an arrangement, which had fallen into disuse, whereby other foreign correspondence for the newspapers, from whatever quarter, might be obtained on application at the office before any delivery was made to the general public. The only condition required was

that the envelopes used should be of a peculiar tint, so that in sorting they might easily be selected.

It was a little disappointing, after such service rendered, to find, within a few months, two London papers of large circulation making groundless attacks. Of course every public department is properly open to the sharpest criticism, but surely a little trouble given to previous examination, when no obstacle is thrown in the way, is needful to render criticism just, discreet, or useful; and unfortunately this is often omitted. On this occasion I privately laid before the authorities of each of these papers a complete refutation of the statements made, together with a remonstrance against their hasty insertion. I have it on record that one paper corrected its error, and though I have no such memorandum with regard to the other, I can hardly suppose that in that quarter the duty was omitted, that journal having been, with this single exception, a uniform supporter of my measures.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

Revenue.

Following, as heretofore, that mode of accounting which for the purpose of comparison it was still necessary to retain, viz., the one in use at the time when penny postage was established, the results, in round numbers, may be briefly stated thus:—

The gross revenue increased from 2,700,000*l.* in 1854 to 3,300,000*l.* in 1859; but, as the cost of management increased in the same period from 1,500,000*l.* to somewhat more than 1,900,000*l.*, the increase in the net revenue was somewhat less than 200,000*l.**

* 'Parliamentary Return, 1868,' No. 215.

Expenditure: Causes of Increase.

As already shown, the chief increase in the cost of management was referable partly to increase in staff, consequent on the vast multiplication of correspondence (by that time seven-fold its original amount), partly to increased salaries and allowances, partly to the extension and ramification of the postal system (already affording collection and delivery to almost every village in the United Kingdom), partly to the expense of increased facilities and conveniences afforded to the public, partly to the costly acceleration of the more important mails, and last, not least, to increase in the charge for mail conveyance consequent upon its transfer from mail-coaches to railway trains. It is obvious that several of these causes of expenditure have no reference whatever to Penny Postage, but must have arisen under the old rates.

It must be remarked here that the multiplication of sub-post offices and receiving-houses, implied in what has just been mentioned, would have been very much more costly had not the expense been controlled by established rules based on sound principles. It has already been shown that the old plan of considering every case "according to its merits," to use the official expression, that is to say, of fixing the salary of A without ever inquiring how much was paid to B, C, or D, for equal service, had been to a considerable extent superseded by fixed scales. But we now went fully into the matter and brought the system to completion, thus providing a satisfactory guide available not only for new offices but also for any increase of duty at those already established; an arrangement which both removed many anomalies and saved much valuable time. The care with which the work was done is attested by the fact that up to the

present time (1868) the scales, so far as I am aware, have undergone little or no modification, and have even been used for higher offices than those for which it was originally intended. Like benefit was derived from a scale prepared, about the same time, for regulating the amount of security demanded from postmasters according to the extent and frequency of their opportunities for defrauding the revenue; a scale which, after some suspension, is, I believe, in force at the present time (1870).

Predictions Fulfilled.

It may be remembered that, in my evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1838, I expressed a confident anticipation that if penny postage were adopted the public would, after a while, expend as much in postage as under the old system, and, consequently, that the gross revenue would eventually be made good. This anticipation was more than realised in the year 1851.*

As regards net revenue, I expressed an opinion to the effect that the great increase of letters necessary to make good the gross revenue would require an additional expenditure of about 300,000*l.* per annum, and, consequently, that the net revenue would be reduced by that amount, or to about 1,300,000*l.* a year. The actual increase of expenditure, however, owing to causes already mentioned, far exceeded my estimate; consequently, the net revenue of the same year (1851) was only 1,118,000*l.*;† and it was not till six years later that it rose to 1,300,000*l.*‡ And though, as must be obvious to the attentive peruser of the foregoing pages, these results, but for almost endless obstructions, would have occurred at a much

* 'First Report,' p. 68.

† 'First Report,' p. 68. ‡ 'Fourth Report,' p. 44.

earlier date, it was with deep satisfaction that I at length saw my predictions fulfilled. I may add here that, in the year 1862, the net revenue so far exceeded any expectation that I had held out as nearly to equal the largest amount obtained under the old high rates;* and that ever since that year it has greatly exceeded that amount. Of course these comparative statements are all based on the mode of calculation which was in use at the time when penny postage was adopted.

When, however, my predictions with regard to revenue were fulfilled beyond all question, we thought it would be well, while retaining the old mode of reckoning for the purpose of showing progress under the new system as compared with the old, to introduce a more accurate mode, for the purpose of exhibiting, as nearly as possible, the actual financial results of postal operations; and the results thus arrived at were given, for the first time, in the Report for 1859. By this changed mode of reckoning, which is set forth in some detail in its proper place,† it appears that the amount to which the Treasury was actually benefited by the Post Office, though rather less than that arrived at by the old mode of reckoning, was still more than 1,100,000*l.*; and, of course, when comparison with the past is not in question, the amount thus ascertained is the one which it is best to take. It may be added that the substantial part of this revenue, viz., about 1,000,000*l.*, was derived from inland correspondence; to which, as the reader may remember, I had always pointed as the main source of actual income.

* 'Parliamentary Return, 1868,' No. 215.

† 'Sixth Report,' pp. 32, 33.

STAFF.

Promotion by Merit.

During this period the system of promotion by merit was brought into full operation.

In the three metropolitan offices, when a vacancy occurred, application for appointment was open to all; the respective claims were carefully compared, and, without the admission of any other consideration whatever, the claim which was adjudged to be best carried the day. How strict our practice was may be shown by the following incident. To keep our course free from disturbing influence, it had been laid down that any intercession from without in favour of individual officers should act, if not injuriously, at least not beneficially, on the advancement of those concerned; and, as the rule had been sanctioned by the Treasury, it certainly was not from that quarter that I should have expected its breach. It is much easier, however, to authorize the establishment of a rule than to bend old habits in conformity with its tenour, or even to remember its very existence; and, not a little to my amusement, I received an interceding letter from the very Secretary of the Treasury, my friend Mr. (now Sir William) Hayter. The following was my reply:—

'27th December, 1855.

'My dear Hayter,

'We really do mean to carry out the *Treasury* regulations as to promotion honestly and with an utter disregard of all conflicting interests, however potent.

'With this view the inclosed circular has been issued, and every violation of the rule laid down, even though it extend no further than the suggestion of an application such as that which you have forwarded, is punished by reprimand and probable degradation.

'Fortunately young ——'s conduct is so good, especially as regards the observance of the rules of the office, that I feel justified in assuming that he is not to blame in the present instance, but I cannot communicate the application to the Duke, neither can I allow it to influence any advice I may have to give him.

'I am sure you will concur in these views.

'I am, &c.,

'ROWLAND HILL.

'The Right Hon. W. G. HAYTER, M.P.'

By the transfer to the Post Office of appointment to all the higher postmasterships, opportunity for promotion was greatly enlarged, and posts formerly bestowed for political services now became the rewards of approved merit; a change obviously involving great improvement in the quality of the persons thus entrusted with powers and duties of no small importance to the public.

In the provincial offices a corresponding improvement was, in great measure, secured by delegating the power of appointing their subordinates, under certain restrictions, to the respective postmasters; who, being themselves responsible for the good working of their offices, were naturally led to such selection as would best conduce to that end.

This delegation, so far as related to clerks, was made, as already mentioned, on the recommendation of the Civil Service Commissioners, a recommendation based, I believe, in a measure, on evidence given by my brother Frederic as to the introduction and beneficial operation of a similar plan in relation to the Scotch prisons; and the trust, being satisfactorily exercised, was subsequently extended to the appointment of letter-carriers also.

Of the inconveniences arising from confining admission to the service to candidates passing the Civil Service examinations, of which I have already spoken, some evidence is given by the following

extract from a Report of Mr. Abbott, secretary to the Post Office in Scotland :—

'Considering the different duties of the account, the secretary's, and the sorting branches, I am inclined to believe that the examination should have more special reference to the vacancy the candidate is to fill than to his general knowledge on certain subjects proposed for all in the same class; more especially as regards persons nominated to the sorting office, where manual dexterity, quick sight, and physical activity, are more valuable than mere educational acquirements.'*

But, whatever might be the amount of initial inconvenience arising from neglect of such criteria, the system of promotion by merit, being regulated entirely by reference to official services, was found to work exceedingly well. From the different departments of the metropolitan offices, and from the provincial surveyors, the reports of its operation were almost uniformly satisfactory. Officers were found to take more personal interest in their duties, to do more work without augmentation of force, to make up in some degree for conceded holiday by additional zeal, and to discharge their duties with more cheerfulness and spirit, knowing that good service would bring eventual reward.† In short, almost without exception, good conduct was reported on all sides.

From Sir Charles Trevelyan, one of the Commissioners whose recommendation had led the Treasury to adopt this beneficial change of system, I received the following letter. The italics are the writer's :—

'Treasury, 26th March, 1856.

'My dear Mr. Hill,

'The good fruits of improvement described in the Second Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, and especially in the section headed "Staff of Officers," are a

* 'Third Report,' p. 28.

† 'Second Report,' pp. 27—29; 'Third Report,' pp. 24—29; 'Fifth Report,' p. 23; 'Sixth Report,' pp. 38, 39.

rich reward to my brother Commissioners and myself for any assistance we may have given in producing them; and it is especially gratifying to know that the anticipated result of giving to this large body of public officers a higher interest in their profession and an increased self-respect, and of bringing them more fully under the influence of the wholesome stimulants to human action, has been attained. We did what we could; but much the largest share belongs to Lord Canning and yourself, and Mr. Tilley and your brother, and other distinguished officers of the department, who not only cordially co-operated with the Commissioners of Inquiry in framing the plan, but, what is far more difficult and important, *carried it into actual effect* with characteristic firmness and prudence.

'Sincerely yours,

'C. E. TREVELYAN.

'ROWLAND HILL, Esq.,
'&c., &c., &c.'

My own strong feeling of the value of the improvement I find thus expressed a year and a half later:—

EXTRACT from a letter to the Duke of Argyll, dated October 2nd, 1857.

'While referring to Treasury authority in justification of the course adopted, I think it right to add that my own opinion is entirely in accordance with that authority; nay, that I am convinced that some of the more difficult improvements recently effected—that, for instance, which has already had so beneficial an effect on the London early delivery—could not have been accomplished under the old system of promotion.'

Health.

In the midst of proceedings thus tending not more to the public good than to the true interests of the officers of the department, other measures were taken by which the welfare of the latter was yet more directly and obviously promoted. One of these was the formal appointment of a medical gentleman to take, in addition to some other duties, regular charge

of the health of the large number of letter-carriers attached to the chief office. The post was conferred on Dr. Waller Lewis, who had given much previous attention to the means of improving the sanitary condition of large bodies of men, and who, I may add (1870) still holds the office. The duties of this officer—of course with proper assistance—were subsequently extended to the homes of invalids, and also to the staff at each of the new district offices; similar appointments being afterwards made at both Dublin and Edinburgh.

Means were also taken to supply the men with pure water; serious mischief having arisen, especially in times when cholera or diarrhœa was epidemic, from their resort to a neighbouring pump attached to Goldsmiths' Hall; the water of which, though most attractive in appearance and taste, was found by analysis to be very deleterious in quality.

In the erection of the new district offices much care was taken to avoid those bad internal arrangements, alike destructive to rapid action and injurious to health, which want of either attention or experience had introduced at St. Martin's-le-Grand; and such as were erected by the close of this period were spoken of by Dr. Lewis as being, in his opinion, "nearly all that can be required in a hygienic point of view."*

A circumstance acting somewhat injuriously upon the general health of the department was found, where perhaps little expected, in the new standard of acquirement established for admission to the service. The persons best fitted for letter-carriers' duties in a physical point of view are obviously those whose previous occupation has inured them to labour of body and endurance of weather; but such persons were, in effect, to a great extent excluded by the

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 73.

new requirements, which, on the other hand, gave, for the most part, easy admission to shopmen, clerks, domestic servants, and others but little accustomed to out-door exercise. To remedy this, the Postmaster-General (the Duke of Argyll) requested the Civil Service Commissioners to adopt a somewhat lower standard of acquirement, and at the same time authorized Dr. Lewis to subject all candidates for the office of letter-carrier to stricter test as regards bodily strength. The application of this higher physical standard caused the rejection of at least one candidate out of four.*

By all these measures, the health of the department, which, with every allowance for the favourable age of its officers, stood even at the beginning of the period in very advantageous comparison with that of London generally, was gradually raised to a very high state indeed, in which I hope it still continues, though positive evidence thereof is lacking; as, since 1864, all information relative to the health of the staff has been omitted from the Annual Reports.

One further improvement, however, seems very desirable, though the means of effecting it have not yet been found. In the year 1857, Dr. Lewis having reported on the sanitary condition of the dwellings of the letter-carriers, sorters, and messengers attached to the chief office,† the Annual Report makes this comment:—

'It is painful to reflect how much sickness must be caused by the small, close, and ill-ventilated houses or rooms in which many of these officers reside; an amount of sickness much beyond anything that can depend on the regulations of the department itself.'‡

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 35. † 'Fourth Report,' p. 77.
‡ 'Fourth Report,' p. 32.

A hope was expressed that, as the department had stated its readiness, in case of suitable abodes being provided, to give a guarantee against loss from arrears of rent, provision would be made by commercial enterprise;* but this hope still remains unfulfilled; and it must be admitted that no small part of the difficulty rests with the men themselves.

Insurance.

Another measure for the benefit of the staff, and more especially its humbler members, that is to say most of its number, consisted in arrangements for facilitating life insurance, and for placing the security of such investment beyond all doubt; an improvement of considerable advantage to the public, as it tends to retain in its service a number of careful, provident men.

At an earlier period, as already mentioned, a mutual insurance society had been formed in the London office, under the sanction of the Postmaster-General and other chief officers; but, owing to errors in the scale of premiums and payments, this society had fallen into difficulties, such as to show that it would, at no distant period, be unable to meet its liabilities. Attempts had been made from time to time to obtain assistance from the Treasury; thus, in the year 1849, at Mr. Tilley's request, I spoke urgently on the subject to Mr. Hayter; a recent application having been refused. While undertaking to reconsider the matter, Mr. Hayter suggested that certain perquisites should be applied to this purpose; a suggestion formally, though unsuccessfully, made by myself more than two years before.

Amidst the labour and anxiety that weighed upon

* 'Fourth Report,' p. 77.

me during the latter portion of the year 1849, and a large portion of the following, the period, namely, of the Sunday Observance agitation, I had no spare attention for the furtherance of this useful measure, nor was it until the beginning of the year 1851 that I was able to take the next step. Then, however, I spoke to Mr. Cornewall Lewis on the subject, proposing that Government should give up to the fund the proceeds of the unclaimed money orders, which I estimated at about 1,100*l.* a year, and explaining to him a plan which I had in view for extending the utility of the association, by including not only life insurance, but also guarantees for the conduct of the insured. Mr. Lewis agreed in the opinion that the association should be helped in its present difficulties, but, objecting to anything in the shape of charity, was not inclined to go further; and in this position matters remained for the time. On my brother's appointment, however, later in the same year, I directed his attention to the matter, and, in a short time, he produced a plan which, satisfying the Treasury, procured for the society its required assistance.

The first step in accordance with this sanction was to induce an office of undoubted stability to take upon itself the society's liabilities; and to this the Atlas Assurance Company assented upon receiving the sum of 2,000*l.*, which was drawn from the void order fund; and it was arranged that thenceforth the whole of this fund, amounting at the time to about 1,400*l.* a year, together with the interest on its previous accumulation, a principal of about 12,000*l.*, and lastly, all the money found in such dead letters as could not be returned to the writers, should be applied towards assisting officers in payment of insurance fees. In this manner the association in question, "The Post Office Widows'

and Orphans' Fund Society," was placed on a firm footing.

As, however, the demands thus made on these various funds were not sufficient, in the scale laid down, to absorb the whole, a portion of the void order fund was employed in rescuing from difficulties another society in the London Office, called "The Letter-Carriers' Burial Fund;" the rights and claims of which became perplexed and uncertain on the amalgamation of the two sets of letter-carriers; with only one of which the society had been connected.

These remedial measures had the effect of exchanging past contributions into payments for life insurance; and thus gave to every contributor the full benefit of his former sacrifices. The feeling of the men on the adoption of this expedient was expressed in a warm letter of thanks to the Postmaster-General,* a similar letter being addressed also to my brother.

The fund still being by no means exhausted, authority was obtained to apply the remainder to aiding members of the service throughout the United Kingdom to insure their lives, by using it in part payment of the premiums; and, even from the best established insurance offices a considerable reduction of fees was obtained, in consideration of the large amount of business thus thrown into their hands.

By the end of 1857 the total amount insured for was 280,000*l.*† As might be expected, the greatest amount of providence was shown in Scotland, England at first lagging much behind, while poor Ireland was fairly distanced. Subsequently, however, England came up with Scotland, and even Ireland amended her relative position.

Still, the number of insurers, when compared with that of the whole force, was at best but small: a

* 'Third Report,' p. 64. † 'Fourth Report,' p. 33.

defect attributed to the premiums having to be paid in quarterly amounts; an arrangement unsuited to men in the receipt of weekly or even monthly wages. It was therefore arranged that insurers should have the option of making their payments by means of a small reduction in their pay; and this improvement, in the practical working of which Mr. Scudamore, then Accountant and Receiver-General, gave essential aid, was found to produce the desired effect; the number of insurers increasing by about eighty per cent. within three months from the time of change.*

Another beneficial change arose thus. Of course, in these departments of service, where trust is essential to action, guarantees are required of those admitted; a requirement necessarily producing either trouble or expense. Private guarantees were commonly procured, though some nominees got the security of the British Guarantee Association, the fees for obtaining which, however, although moderate, implied a considerable reduction from the smaller salaries. Mr. Banning, the postmaster of Liverpool, conceived the plan of a mutual guarantee amongst the officers themselves; and this, proving very successful at Liverpool, was subsequently introduced into the Chief Office, and extended to the offices of some other of the principal towns.†

Libraries.

The following is an extract from the Postmaster-General's Report for 1858:—

'It is with much pleasure that I have witnessed the establishment, among the clerks of the Chief Office in London, of an institution called the Post Office Library and Literary Association. The large number of clerks who have enrolled

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 43. † p. 42.

their names shows how general among them are a taste for reading and a desire for mental cultivation and pleasures of a superior kind. Besides much support within the department, the institution has received many liberal donations, both of money and books, from without—among others, a munificent gift of 50*l.* from His Royal Highness the Prince Consort.'*

In the following year similar institutions on a smaller scale were established at nearly all the London district offices, and also at the Glasgow office.†

In the London office the institution was partly aided, partly supplemented, by the delivery of lectures, a work in which several of the higher officials took part; and on occasion of the annular eclipse of 1858 I took my turn by giving a lecture on the subject of that phenomenon, and had the pleasure of addressing a very full and very attentive audience.

Summary.

I cannot better close this account of the Post Office staff, numbering at that time more than twenty-four thousand persons in all, of which more than three thousand served in the London district, than by quoting the following passage from the Sixth Annual Report, that for 1859, issued as usual in the following year, and signed by the Postmaster-General of the day, Lord Elgin:—

'It is with much satisfaction that I contemplate the many improvements made within the last few years in relation to the staff of officers. The arrangement under which every person who enters the service is placed on probation before being fully admitted; the gradual increase of salary within the respective classes according to each officer's good conduct and increasing usefulness; the promotion from class to class, and from appointment to appointment, according to merit

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 25. † 'Sixth Report,' p. 43.

and superior qualification practically demonstrated, and irrespective of all other consideration; the strengthening of responsibility and of energetic management by giving to the postmasters the choice of their own clerks and letter-carriers; the improvement that has been made, where necessary, in the sanitary state of the post offices generally, and the appointment at the Metropolitan offices of medical men to attend gratuitously on all employed there (except the higher paid officers), and thus to stop disease at an early stage; the extension to all the servants of the Post Office of a pension in old age; and the arrangement by which every man can obtain aid in insuring his life, and thus provide for his family at his death,—are excellent, and have, I believe, produced the best effects.

'I have the less hesitation in giving my testimony to these improvements, because, as I have been but a short while in office, most of them were effected during the time of my predecessors.'*

* 'Sixth Annual Report,' p. 43.

CHAPTER XIII.

DISCONTENTS IN OFFICE. (1855-1859.)

WHILE, however, content thus prevailed at the Post Office, and while reports from all quarters spoke highly of the general conduct of those employed in its service, it was inevitable that amongst so large a body of men discontent should arise somewhere or other. Promotion by merit, however satisfactory to the deserving, did little to gratify those who had no merit to show, and was yet more distasteful to any whose conduct positively shrunk from examination. Even less gratification was doubtless felt by men who found themselves deprived of extra pay long received but never earned, nay, accorded where, instead of additional service, even ordinary duty had been so remitted as to become little more than nominal.

Of course, too, the officials of the Post Office, high and low, like all other persons employed in whatever service, hold themselves constantly open to an offer of increased salary or other improvement in condition; and as, in the nature of things, such advancement does not always come so frequently as desired, are not a little disposed to give the matter a helping hand when convenient. It will readily be imagined that such movements are most frequent in the lower walks of the service; or at least take there their most troublesome form. Sorters and letter-carriers, like other handicraftsmen, are more struck with the amount of their own work than able to appreciate the superior skill and incomparably greater labour

required in the higher operations; and thus their inequality of condition, though the natural result of inferiority in qualifications, is too apt to be regarded as a standing grievance. Unfortunately, the public is somewhat apt to foster the error; to accept without examination sweeping statements as to excessive labour and insufficient recompense; and, as in the case of other operatives, the evil is prodigiously aggravated by men who in such aggravation find advantage or gratification to themselves, and who unhesitatingly swerve as far from truth and justice as public credulity will allow—no very limited tether.

In a weekly paper entitled the 'Civil Service Gazette' I was subjected, from an early period of my career at the Post Office, to almost constant personal attacks; many of them written with considerable plausibility, but all void of substantial truth. Every one who has well considered the subject of slander must know how great an advantage the unscrupulous journalist has over the object of his attack, in the dilemma in which he places him of either replying, at much expense of time and dignity, to unfounded charges, or of allowing to them the sanction which a very large, though somewhat thoughtless, portion of the public infers from reticence. The amount of mischief that may be done in any department of manufacturing industry by artful misrepresentation addressed to over-willing ears has been painfully illustrated of late; and this is by no means without its parallel in that widely-extended department of Government which was so long the scene of my labours. Some notion of the means employed may be formed by a perusal of the following handbill, a copy of which was most properly forwarded to the Chief Office by the postmaster of a large provincial town, who found it in circulation among the clerks of his office :—

POST OFFICE REFORM.

AGITATE—AGITATE—AGITATE!!!

READ THE "CIVIL SERVICE GAZETTE,"

Unstamped 5d.—Stamped 6d.

July 24th, 1858,

Rowland Hill's Last Chase!

BREAK DOWN OF THE GAGGING SYSTEM!

WHITE SLAVES OF THE POST OFFICE.

31st,

Rowland Hill's Job Frustrated:

HIS GREAT REVENGE:

The Screw and Gagging System of the General Post Office.

POST OFFICE REFORMS

AND THE WAY TO GET THEM:

HOPE FOR THE LETTER CARRIERS.

Coming Emancipation of the White Niggers.

August 7th,

POST OFFICE MANAGEMENT.

OUR MISSING LETTERS AND OUR LATE DELIVERIES.

The Letter Carriers' "Bill of Fare."

14th,

Post Office Reform by Merit,

REVELATIONS FROM ST. MARTINS LE GRAND.

HOPE FOR THE OPPRESSED.

THE POST MASTER GENERAL AND THE LONDON LETTER CARRIERS.

Communications addressed, pre paid, to C. W. No. 9, East Mount Terrace, LONDON.—E. will meet with immediate attention.

Self-answering as such exaggeration must appear to the thoughtful and well-informed, it is not without its effect on the unthinking and ignorant, particularly when the demands it implies correspond with their own natural desires; and, in some hope of averting, or at least lessening mischief, I drew the attention of Lord Colchester, then Postmaster-General, to the intrusion of this handbill into the department. It must be added that the copy received at the provincial office was enclosed in a circular signed by a former postmaster, who had been dismissed for misconduct. His lordship entered into the matter with interest, and suggested further inquiry; which, being made, showed that the offensive paper had been sent to various other large offices. Nothing, however, resulted from these measures; and, as I had long ago directed my private secretary to make no report of what appeared in that journal, save in cases of absolute necessity, I was generally able, when a good-natured friend inquired if I had seen the last attack, to reply in all sincerity that I did not read the paper. The attacks, I understand, continued some years longer, many of them being traced to discharged servants of the office. I cannot but express my regret that the Civil Service should not have seen that it was disgraced by the support of a paper which condescended to such disreputable means for accomplishing its objects. Be this as it may, it is easier to shut one's eyes to a fire than to put it out or prevent its spreading, and, as will be seen, the sparks thus maliciously scattered were not altogether without effect.

The eligibility of a letter carrier's position at the time to which I refer was shown, not only by the large number of respectable men constantly applying for appointment, but by the advantages attached to the service in respect of rate of wages, supply of

clothing, opportunity for rising into the class of sorters, the pension provided for old age (combined with assistance in life assurance), the gratuitous supply to a large portion of the force of medical attendance and medicine, and lastly, the annual holiday granted without loss of wages; while, with all this remuneration, the hours of labour, taking one day with another, were limited to eight, and I may add that measures were in progress for yet further improving the condition of the letter-carriers.*

Every care, moreover, had been taken to provide for the speedy rectification of individual cases of hardship, which in so large and rapidly extending a Department might unwittingly arise, by giving the fullest opportunity for legitimate complaint, by guarding all such complainants as took the prescribed mode from any consequent prejudice, however unfounded their allegations might prove, and by allowing to the lowest man in the service the means of appeal to the highest authority, that of the Postmaster-General. With such provision it might perhaps have been hoped that not only would all

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 40. One curious question bearing on the letter-carriers' position, and which occupied some little attention at this time, I must here mention, as it is connected with a popular misconception, sometimes fruitful in trouble, viz., whether public gratuities, such as Christmas-boxes, should be taken into account in estimating a letter-carrier's emoluments or not. These Christmas-boxes, I may observe, average about 13*l.* per letter-carrier, and amount in some cases, I am told, to as much as 50*l.* or 60*l.* At first sight it appears most ungenerous to include them, and yet a short statement will show that to some extent this is unavoidable. A letter-carrier, say, has attained the highest position open to him as such, and is offered admission to the class of sorters, where the minimum pay equals his present maximum, while the maximum is more than double what he is receiving. This offer he declines, because by accepting it he would cease to have direct intercourse with the public, and so lose all opportunity for gratuity. This, of course, he has a perfect right to do; but when he continues, while rejecting the higher rate, to point to the lower as ground of complaint, either the answer must explain the anomaly by referring to the extraneous addition, or a complaint really unfounded remains plausible, and obtains inconsiderate support.

motive to such insubordinate proceedings as had frequently troubled the Department in previous years be entirely removed, but even that irregular modes of complaint would not have been taken, at least until after full trial of the appointed channel.

Nevertheless, about two months after the circulation of the inflammatory paper given above, amidst an almost total absence of formal complaint, and certainly without substantiation of any grievance in respect of a class or even of individuals, a meeting of letter-carriers was held in the South Western district, and reported in the newspapers, at which 'Speeches were made containing statements which the men who uttered them must have known to be false, but from the consequences of which they endeavoured to screen themselves by concealing their names.'*

For the time the misconduct was repressed; but we felt that without either such a course of concession as would gradually raise salaries far beyond true remuneration (thus tending to serious waste and other evils, not less certain though less patent), or such union of firmness and energy in all the authorities of the department as would render even an approach to mutiny unsafe to those concerned, recurrence of trouble was certain, and its imminence could not but remain a source of anxiety. This will further appear in a later period of my narrative.

Slander, however, was not the only means resorted to by malcontents; threats being added. Of these no mention appears in my journal, as of course I wished to keep off all apprehension on my account from my family, and particularly from my wife. At least three times, however, notice was sent me that

* 'Fifth Report,' p. 40. In the admonitory address from which the above quotation is made, and which was afterwards published in the Annual Report, the position of a letter-carrier is distinctiy set forth.

unless the wages of the letter-carriers were raised I should be assassinated. The first of these occurrences was, I believe, in 1854, when I was summoned from a holiday sojourn at Brighton, in consequence of a letter to this effect being received at the office, where, in my absence, it had been opened by my brother. On arriving at the London Station, I found my brother, Mr. Peacock, the solicitor to the Post Office, Mr. (now Sir William) Bodkin, its standing counsel, and, I believe, Mr. Bokenham, head of the Circulation Department, who had all come to meet me, thinking it better that for the time I should not go to the office. The threatening letter was produced, and I was informed that the writing was identified by an expert with that of a certain letter-carrier in the Chief Office, who had lately been giving considerable trouble. In fine, Mr. Peacock, with the concurrence, I think, of Mr. Bodkin, and this, in kind concern for my safety, advised immediate arrest and prosecution. Upon a careful comparison, however, of the anonymous letter, which of course was written in a disguised hand, with a specimen of the suspected man's usual handwriting, I felt so much doubt as to the evidence of identity that I declined to concur in the proceeding, which was consequently abandoned; and I must add that circumstances, though of what nature I cannot not now recollect, seemed afterwards to show that my doubt was well founded.

Another letter, received a year or two afterwards, was more precise in its warning, naming a particular day on which, supposing demands to remain ungranted, execution would take place, notifying also the mode of death fixed upon, viz., by shooting. To allow reasonable time for effecting the change, the interval was somewhat long; and, oddly enough, the day again happened to fall within the period of my holiday, though near its end. As, however, the

notice was so definite, I thought it well to show myself, lest absence, being misinterpreted, should lead to further trouble; and accordingly, returning home the evening before, I went the next morning, at my usual hour and by my usual route, to the office; my practice at that time being to walk the last half-mile of the way. I carried no weapon but my umbrella, but of this I determined to make, if necessary, good use, believing that if properly handled it would prove a very formidable, not to say deadly weapon. I scarcely need say my resolution was not put to its trial.

The last letter I received on such a subject is shown by the postmark to have been sent on December 23rd, 1858. It certainly was rather ill-timed, for in the previous month I had induced the Treasury to abandon its intention of issuing an order forbidding the receipt of Christmas-boxes, and also, as implied above, had obtained for the letter-carriers some improvement in their scale of wages, the Treasury granting even more than was applied for.

Of course I took no more notice of this threat than of its predecessors; and the age to which I have lived is an instance of the longevity proverbially attained by threatened men.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISCELLANEOUS PROCEEDINGS FROM 1855 TO 1859.

VARIOUS occurrences remain to be mentioned before I proceed to that portion of my narrative with which I shall close the history of this period.

An improved code of rules for postmasters had been for some time in hand, though little real progress had been made. The work, however, was now resumed, and the whole code reconstructed.

Likewise, in order to give the public, in a cheap and convenient form, such information regarding the Post Office as is of general interest, we established that small periodical publication which is now so well known by the name of the 'British Postal Guide.' The first number appeared in the year 1856, and its acceptability was shown by the sale soon rising to between twenty and thirty thousand. From that time to this (1868) a revised edition has been regularly issued every quarter.

About two years later a valuable improvement was effected in a publication which had for many years existed under the direction of the Post Office by the name of the 'Daily Packet List.' This was now rearranged, enlarged, and made to convey much information beyond its former meagre contents; a weekly edition was added; and the 'Postal Official Circular,' as it is now called, has performed much useful service. Had the recommendation, however, which was actually adopted by the Postmaster

General been sanctioned in full by the Treasury, the sphere of this publication would have been so extended as to render it a kind of postal monitor; correcting nascent misconception, and keeping the public constantly informed as to the real proceedings of the department.

REGULATION OF CLOCKS.

For the purpose of securing, at the Post Office, that exact indication of time which is so important to its proceedings, measures were taken, under the direction of the Astronomer Royal, for regulating certain of the clocks at the chief office, and also at the branch office in Lombard Street, by means of telegraphic communication with the Observatory at Greenwich.* I need not add that under such superintendence the result was all that could be desired.

STAMPING.

The Post Office stamp indicating date had never been renowned for clearness, and perhaps the constant increase in the number of letters, though of course met from time to time by adequate increase in force, may have tended to make the dark darker still. At all events means for improvement had been for some time in earnest consideration, when circumstances brought public attention pointedly to the defect. At a trial presided over by Lord Campbell, towards the end of 1856, a question of some importance turned upon the precise date at which a letter was posted; and the stamp being too obscure to supply the necessary evidence, his lordship, though in a tone of general friendliness to the Post Office, animadverted rather sharply upon the failure. This brought me a

* 'Fourth Annual Report,' p. 35.

letter from the Duke of Argyll, who was then absent from town, to which I replied as follows :—

'17th December, 1856.

'My dear Lord Duke,

'Active measures for the improvement of the date stamp have long been in progress, and much has already been accomplished; a further minute on the subject will be ready, I hope, by to-morrow night's post; Lord Campbell's censures are therefore, to say the least, ill timed.

'The foreign stamping is on the whole somewhat better than ours, but the difference is not great, and Mr. Bokenham thinks it will disappear when we have a better ink. The foreign stamping is, I believe, in most cases similar to our own, but the work is done more leisurely.

'We have tried various machines, but as yet without success. My son thinks he can overcome the difficulties, and he has for a long time been at work at a model; but your Grace is aware that mechanical inventions are slow of realization; still I hope something may be accomplished before very long.

'I have, &c.,

'Rowland Hill.

'His Grace the Duke of Argyll.'

More than two years elapsed before a satisfactory result was arrived at. Amongst the various machines tried, there were several that would do the work, but such as produced legible marks were deficient in speed, and *vice versâ;* so that the human hand, imperfect as was its operation, still retained its superiority. In the year 1859, however, machines devised by my son were "at length constructed, which are found," says the Report, "to perform the work of stamping and obliterating more quickly and perfectly than by hand."*

My son, however, laboured hard for further improvement so successfully that at the present time, with much increased legibility in the impression, the

* 'Sixth Report,' p. 9.

speed of operation as compared with the best hand-work is at least fifty per cent. higher. The value of his invention was, on Mr. Tilley's recommendation, handsomely recognised, two or three years after my resignation, by a special grant of 1,500*l.*; of which, however, about 650*l.* was in remuneration for actual outlay.

SAVINGS BANKS.

In the year 1859 the first move was made towards that important improvement, the establishment of the Post Office Savings Bank; Mr. Edward Baines, M.P. for Leeds, enclosing to me unofficially, but with a request for attention, a paper on the subject, drawn up by Mr. Sykes of Huddersfield, the originator of the plan. As the matter was obviously cognate to the money order system, I referred it to my brother Frederic, in whose secretarial charge that department then was; and finding my own favourable opinion confirmed by his more elaborate consideration, I wrote on August 2nd to express my concurrence in Mr. Sykes's views, and my readiness to do what I could towards giving them effect. My letter was as follows:—

'August 2nd, 1859.

'My dear Sir,

'Pray excuse the unavoidable delay in replying to your letter of the 30th ult.

'With modifications which could readily be introduced, Mr. Sykes's plan is, in my opinion, practicable so far as the Post Office is concerned.

'The plan also appears to me to be practicable in its other parts; but on these I would suggest the expediency of taking the opinion of some one thoroughly conversant with ordinary banking business, and who is acquainted also with Savings Banks.

'I need not add that, if carried into effect, the plan would

in my opinion prove highly useful to the public, and, in some degree, advantageous to the revenue.

'I shall be most happy, when the time arrives for so doing, to submit it for the approval of the Postmaster-General.

'Faithfully yours,

'ROWLAND HILL.

'E. BAINES, Esq., M.P., Reform Club.'

Mr. Sykes, I must not omit to say, never received nor ever sought any advantage, pecuniary or otherwise, in recompense for his admirable suggestion, contenting himself with the deep gratification of having done what lay in his power to confer an inestimable benefit on the humbler classes of his countrymen.

I will so far anticipate on this subject as to say that Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who at once took up the scheme warmly, subsequently carried the measure through Parliament, and that the machinery for giving it effect was devised by Messrs. Scudamore and Chetwynd.

SALARIES.

I have already implied an opinion that if any of the officers in the Department are underpaid it is rather in the higher walks than the lower; for while for the lower fit men are to be found in abundance, for the higher there is certainly no superfluity; not but that many salaries are in excess of duty and even of competency; an anomaly due to a previous bad mode of promotion; but that the talent, zeal, energy and integrity, with which some of the higher duties are actually performed, and which, for the public benefit, should be found in all, according to their degree, obtain but scanty recompense, even with every allowance for certainty, early income, and claim to pension, in comparison with the emolu-

ments obtained by equal qualifications in the commercial or manufacturing world; so that there is a danger, sometimes realised, of good men being allured from the service by offers or prospects based on the powers and qualities they have therein demonstrated. With this feeling I induced the Postmaster-General to apply to the Treasury early in 1859 for a moderate increase of salary to the Assistant Secretaries, and some few others who had distinguished themselves by efficient discharge of their duties. Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary to the Treasury, after calling for more information, and considering the question at an interview appointed for the purpose, obtained the adoption of this recommendation, though not to its full extent.

In setting forth the claims of the two Assistant Secretaries I could not, without pain to a meritorious individual, draw a distinction between them which strict justice required; such discrimination being the more objectionable, as the comparison, if made, must have been in favour of my own brother. Though therefore the estimate of their respective merits already mentioned remained unaltered in my mind, I made no other application of it at this time than to place in my brother's hands a paper in which his superior claims are distinctly recognised.

VOLUNTEER CORPS.

In the same year, the Volunteer movement having begun, we thought it important that a corps should be raised in the Post Office; trusting that such a move might act as an example to the Civil Service generally. Accordingly, on May 4th, I wrote to the Postmaster-General, Lord Colchester, on the subject, and obtained his ready sanction. Upon my communicating with the heads of departments, I was

told that there would be readiness enough to volunteer if only the expenses could be provided for, or reduced to a low rate; that the men would willingly give their time, but thought it somewhat unreasonable that there should be a demand for their money also. The difficulty was overcome by the same means, and I suppose to about the same extent, as in other corps; but from that day to this I have been unable to understand the policy or propriety of making men pay for liberty to serve their country, a practice which must, in the nature of things, debar large numbers from enrolment. The movement was not limited to the Chief Office, and was especially satisfactory at Edinburgh.

I have now to mention some attempts at improvement which did not succeed at the time, and remain yet, if ever, to be effected.

COMPULSORY PREPAYMENT.

In my original plan, as may be remembered, I counted upon universal prepayment as an important means towards the simplification of accounts, and consequent economy of time and expense; the expedient of double postage on prepayment being regarded by me as a temporary mode of avoiding the difficulties naturally attending a transition state; and though hitherto postponing the measure to more pressing matters, I had always looked forward to a time suitable for taking the step necessary to the completion of my plan. Of course, the almost universal resort to prepayment had rendered accounts of postage very short and easy, but obviously universal practice alone could render them altogether unnecessary.

In the year 1858, upon a review of all circumstances, we hoped that the fitting time had at length arrived; the proportion of unpaid letters having

become exceedingly small; and we made the attempt. Such a change, however, could not be effected without producing a certain amount of inconvenience; and unfortunately, while those annoyed were loud in their complaints, the general public could not readily be made very sensible of the benefits, economical and otherwise, thence to be derived, and still less as earnest in defence as opponents were in attack; and, not a little to my regret, I found it my duty to recommend to the Postmaster-General that the measure should be indefinitely postponed.

My own feelings and opinions on the subject will be shown in the following extract from a letter which I addressed shortly afterwards to my sister in South Australia:—

'You will learn by the newspapers, perhaps, that we have been in hot water with the public, *i.e.*, with the majority of the public, in consequence of an attempt to make prepayment of inland letters compulsory to the extent of one penny. By this post I send you a parliamentary return, showing our reasons for the measure and the grounds of its abandonment.

'This is the first time I have had to retrace a step; and, to confess the truth, I don't like it. Since the measure was abandoned, many have come forward to defend the restriction; had they done so in the first instance the result might, perhaps, have been different.'

PARCELS POST.

As early as 1842* I had recommended the establishment of a parcels post, but was prevented from any immediate action by my dismissal in that year from the Treasury; and for a long time after my recall to office measures of more pressing importance, combined with the difficulties of my position, compelled further delay. Even when I had more leisure and

* Report of Select Committee on Postage (1843), p. 41.

was on firmer ground, the ill-judged opposition of the railway companies remained a constant obstacle. In the year 1858 the question was taken up by the Society of Arts, a meeting being held on the subject, with Lord Ebrington, now Earl of Fortescue, in the chair, and an able Report adopted, drawn up by my friend Mr. Chadwick. Nevertheless, this valuable addition to public convenience is still a desideratum.

TUBULAR CONVEYANCE.

The division of London into districts naturally induced inquiry as to the swiftest and cheapest means of conveyance over the comparatively short distances between office and office. Mail-carts were at once put in use, but I was inclined to hope that a swifter mode might be found; one, too, less liable to interruption.

I called to mind an attempt made thirty or forty years before, by a Mr. Vallance, to propel a vehicle containing passengers through a partially exhausted tube; the project then in view being the construction of an air-tight tunnel between London and Brighton. Of this I had received some account from my friend, the late Mr. Moses Ricardo, who had been a passenger in a short experimental trip. He told me, indeed, that on reaching the terminus he and those with him "got a bang" by the abrupt stoppage of the vehicle, no arrangement having been made for its gradual check; but knowing that such arrangement was very feasible, and apprehending no severe consequences in any case to letters or newspapers, I hoped a similar plan might prove applicable to the purpose in hand. I therefore called in the assistance of two able engineers, viz., Mr. Charles Hutton Gregory, and Mr. Edward Cowper, who jointly carried on, with great care and skill, a full investi-

gation into the practicability of the scheme. To avoid needless expense, they conducted their experiments on a small scale; nor was any line of tubes of a size for actual use ever laid down, though Mr. Cowper devised and constructed a very ingenious air-pump, especially applicable to the exhaustion of the tubes, as was attested by its complete success.

The conclusion arrived at was that the plan was perfectly practicable, but that for distances so short the economy in time would not be sufficient to justify the additional expense involved in the innovation.

Some years later, remembering this ground of condemnation, I inquired whether the plan could not be made available for a larger purpose. Up to that time it had not been found practicable to convey the mail from London to Dublin, Glasgow, Edinburgh, or Paris—four most important cities—within the compass of a night; acceleration, therefore, up to this point was highly desirable. Even now (1868) much as has been done, the work is not absolutely perfect; while the increased expense by which the last abridgement, though of not more than two or three hours, has been effected exceeds 15,000*l.* per annum. Now my hope was that by the establishment of tubular conveyance so far as Dover on the one hand, and Crewe on the other, the necessary acceleration in all the three services—Irish, Scotch, and French—might be obtained; and, judging from the estimate made with reference to the London District, I hoped that the cost would not greatly exceed the actual payment for the railway service to be superseded. To these larger questions, therefore, the attention of the two able engineers was now turned.

I must confess, however, my views were not altogether limited to increased speed: I saw that tubular conveyance, if successful, would facilitate frequent

despatch; indeed, that a rapid succession of mails would probably be the most economical way of using the apparatus; again, that as the tubes could without inconvenience keep the line of ordinary roads, pass through the heart of towns, and even be carried when necessary through the very post offices along the route, I hoped for no small economy, both of time and money, in the disuse of the mail-carts plying between such offices and the various railway stations. I further thought that, if railway companies saw a successful competitor for postal service, they would moderate their demands, or, if remaining unreasonable, would be controlled by arbitrators, who would of course take the new rival into account.

Lastly, I hoped that the great acceleration consequent upon the adoption of the new plan would prove highly acceptable to newspaper proprietors, by expediting the distribution of their journals.

In due time, I received a very able report upon the subject. This was drawn up by Mr. Cowper, but fully endorsed by Mr. Gregory. The substance is given in the following passage:—

'I find that with pipes of sufficient diameter, and a vacuum of 11 lbs., a speed of 120 to 150 miles an hour might be obtained, but at a very great cost, both in first outlay and in working expenses.'

I may add that the means recommended was exhaustion of the tube, not the injection of air; that powerful engines would have had to be erected at intervals of only four miles; that the chief weight to be dealt with was not that of the piston and the mail—which really constituted only a small fraction of the whole—but that of the air itself; that the annual expense, including four per cent. interest on outlay, would be, for a tube ten inches in diameter, about 32,000*l.* the hundred miles, but for a fifteen-inch

tube, which I regarded as indispensable, no less than 80,000*l.*

As this latter amount largely exceeds even the high payments for railway conveyance over the same distance, the project was indefinitely postponed, without its very entertainment, so far as I am aware, ever having reached the public ear. And here, I may remark, that almost every improvement, mechanical or otherwise, is preceded by more or less of inquiry, cogitation, and experiment, sometimes involving serious labour and expense, which, ending only in disappointment, remains unknown; while the public, through absence of information, naturally makes its estimate of labour by reference to that only which produces manifest results; an error often productive of great injustice to inventors, who are thus regarded rather as men that have made lucky hits than as those who by energy, perseverance, and generally great pecuniary sacrifice, have, after many failures and abortions, worked their way to valuable results. I, indeed, was now able to make needful experiments without any risk to myself or even much outlay to the department; but projectors are seldom so fortunately placed.

When, some time afterwards, a company was formed for reducing the plan of tubular conveyance to practice, all the information on the subject acquired by the Post Office was handed over for its use; and though all invitation to partnership, which was much pressed, was of course declined, and all covenant postponed until the successful working of the scheme should be established, one line, so laid down as to be available for our purpose, viz., that from the Euston Station to the North Western district Post Office, a distance of about half a mile, was used accordingly. Unfortunately, however, the whole enterprise proved unprofitable, and for the time, at

least, tubular conveyance of mails came to an end. Still, what is recorded here may one day prove useful, since the day may arrive—perhaps is now come—when, on some one line at least, the expense involved, prodigious as it must be, will be justified by the amount of correspondence and the importance of speed. Perhaps the approaching termination of the contract for the Irish mail service may afford convenient opportunity for the trial.*

Controversy with Mr. Robert Stephenson.

In the course of this period I was reluctantly drawn into controversy with the eminent engineer, Mr. Robert Stephenson, then President of the Society of Engineers, who, in his inaugural address, in defiance of facts, with which at his request I had supplied him, represented the railway system as essential to the fiscal success of penny postage, and even to the conveyance of the mails; and then proceeded to charge the Post Office with harsh and unjust dealing in relation to the railway companies, and with uncertainty, irregularity, and delay in its own proceedings. The dissatisfaction which I naturally felt and expressed at statements and charges so unfounded, being reported to Mr. Stephenson, drew from him a letter in which he expressed regret at my annoyance, thanked me for the information supplied to him, admitted "all the principal facts therein stated," but retained his own conclusions; at the same time deprecating controversy, and speaking in the highest terms of my public services. To remove, as far as practicable, the erroneous impression necessarily produced by Mr. Stephenson's address, and which of course his private letter could not remove, I requested Mr. Edward Page, as the officer

* For further information on this subject, see Appendix M.

most conversant with the whole subject, to prepare a complete exposition of the facts of the case; and this, drawn up with Mr. Page's usual care and ability, appeared in the Appendix to the Second Report of the Postmaster-General (p. 45), and I may add will still repay perusal.

In a subsequent address, however, to the Institution, Mr. Stephenson, without any effectual reply to Mr. Page's definite and accurate statements, repeated his former asseverations. Holding it unprofitable to argue against declamation, I allowed the controversy to drop; nor should I now have thought it needful to trouble the reader with the above statement, had not a recent biographer of Mr. Stephenson reopened the question.

NEWSPAPER PRIVILEGES.

I now come to a question on which, I fear, sound views will at no time receive much commendation or support from the newspaper press. Inestimable as is the benefit conferred by the action of the *fourth estate*, taken as a whole, it is nevertheless unquestionable that this estate, like those more formally recognised, is at times swayed more or less by considerations not relating altogether to the highest public interest. Naturally conscious of its own high merits, it is a little apt to forget that its good work proceeds, for the most part, from the same motive that impels other caterers to the general welfare and convenience, and to suppose that it has claims which itself would be prompt to deny to other crafts; and these claims it has great power of enforcing, for bold indeed must be the minister who should maintain to the full the public right against so powerful a brotherhood.

The real question is, whether the conveyance of

a newspaper at a lower rate than other printed matter, and, indeed, at a rate too low to cover the cost, be not a sort of bounty or protection granted to a section—in fact, a small section—of newspaper readers at the expense of the general public. My own opinion being strongly in the affirmative, with the addition that such a departure from the principles of free trade is unwarrantable, I found it my duty to prevent, if possible, the establishment of such anomaly. The better, however, to set forth my proceedings on this point, I must mention some antecedent circumstances.

First, it must be borne in mind that while newspapers had been gradually relieved of all special taxation, the postal privileges originally conferred upon them in consideration of such special taxation had been not only maintained, but greatly extended. Thus, whereas under the old system free delivery even of stamped newspapers extended only to such as passed between post town and post town, such towns being but about nine hundred in number, while a charge, varying from one penny to twopence, was levied in all other cases, their free delivery was now almost universal. Of course, too, newspapers shared with letters the advantage of that rapid transmission which was maintained at vast expense.

All this, and much more to the same general purpose, was set forth in an elaborate minute which I had to prepare some time afterwards. Nevertheless, in the year 1858, Government was called on to extend these privileges still further, and this unreasonable demand I felt bound, in the interest of the public, to resist. As the correspondence, *pro* and *con*, will be found at full in Parliamentary Return No. 302, 1860, a short notice here will suffice.

In a minute there given, after dwelling on the important changes mentioned above, I pointed out that the actual rate charged on newspapers, was, in respect of the heavier newspapers, only one-eighth of that charged on letters. I referred to the known impracticability of defining a newspaper, and the consequent necessity of extending the privileges now applied for, if conceded at all, to much other matter; and I indicated the obstacles that would thence arise to the rapid conveyance of the mails, through the difficulty and danger of giving out or receiving heavy bags without stopping the trains.

The Treasury, however, deciding in favour of the memorialists, all that could be done was to devise means to reduce the evil to a minimum; and in this, as indeed in the whole transaction, I had Lord Colchester's thorough support. My device received the approbation of the Treasury, but the whole matter was for the time set aside by the change of Government which speedily followed. Lord Colchester was followed by Lord Elgin, thus continuing the succession of excellent Postmasters-General.

Before this time, however, the 'Times,' generally so friendly to me, and so often affording my plans very valuable support, began a series of attacks on the Post Office, and more particularly on myself, which continued, at short intervals, for some months, and became the source of much trouble. This evil, however,brought its consolation; letters of sympathy, not unmixed with indignation, coming in from various quarters, amongst others from the Duke of Argyll, my late official superior, and from that tried friend of truth and justice, the late Lord Radnor.

It is with much regret that I say anything in disparagement of the leading journal; omission, how-

ever, would impair the truth of this narrative, and would so far leave others that may tread in my path unwarned as to what, in like circumstances, they must expect. As I have already said, the 'Times' has much oftener afforded me support than subjected me to attack; frequently, too, bringing a salve for the very sore it had made, and ably maintaining those views which, in its moments of irritation, it had scornfully disparaged. On one of the very points on which it attacked the office about this time, viz., the comparative amount of work and wages in the department, it subsequently wrote in an admirable manner; nor can I refer my readers to an abler exposition of sound principles than is to be found in its article of July 24th, 1862. I cannot touch upon this subject without mentioning the remarkable fact that, whereas the introduction of penny postage was really followed by a reduction in the hours of work, and at the same time with an increase in the remuneration to almost every man in the department, save only the Postmaster-General and the Secretary, an impression has very generally prevailed, and still, I believe, remains in many quarters, that the truth is the very reverse.

Early in the year 1860, Mr. Gladstone requested me to attend at his office to meet the manager of the 'Times' and another gentleman, who wished to make some representations on the part of the journals. The interview took place accordingly, when I found that the demand was for a reduction of the newspaper rate in all cases, however heavy or light the paper, to one penny. The argument chiefly relied on by the applicants was that the railway companies were happy to convey the papers at half the charge; to this I merely replied that, if such were the case, there could be no reason, seeing that there was no monopoly in the conveyance of news-

papers, to make any application at the Post Office, the whole matter being already provided for. I need not say, however, that this reply, though incapable of refutation, was held to be quite unsatisfactory. Of course, the rejoinder was that the facility in question was limited to places served by railway lines; but I had no difficulty in showing that this destroyed the whole value of the argument, since it was the very relief from extended and ramified operation which enabled railway companies to do the work at so low a rate.

It was almost immediately after this that I was attacked with the severe illness which for a long period disabled me for duty, and from which, indeed, I have never fully recovered. The proceedings closed for the time in a statement made by Mr. Gladstone on May 14th, 1860, when, in reply to an inquiry from Mr. Baines, member for Leeds, in relation to a bill which had been introduced on the subject, he stated that differences of opinion had arisen between those interested and the Post Office on certain points which Parliament would have to consider, and then proceeded as follows:—

'We are, however, met by this difficulty. Sir Rowland Hill, the Secretary to the Post Office, I regret to say, has been labouring under a severe illness, and an intimation has been made to him on medical authority that it is absolutely requisite, in order to the public retaining his invaluable services, that he should have leave of absence for no less a period than six months. I think, therefore, it will be impossible for the Department to state its case on a subject of this kind in the absence of one who, I may say, has been the life and soul of all the Post Office arrangements in this country for the last twenty years. Under these circumstances, I have no alternative but to postpone that inquiry which I admit to be fairly demanded; and as it is uncertain whether or not Sir Rowland Hill may recover before the end of the Session, I think it best to drop the bill, reserving to

myself the renewal of it at a future period, after this inquiry shall have been made.' *

To conclude this subject, I must mention that when, nine years later, the demand for increased newspaper privileges was revived by articles in various journals and speeches in Parliament, the 'Times' leading in the one and Mr. Graves, M.P., for Liverpool, in the other, I turned my attention to the quest of means for so far complying with such demand as might be consistent with justice to the general tax-payer; in other words, I sought to discover whether sufficient facilities might not be afforded, at a low rate, without increasing the loss already sustained by the Post Office in dealing with newspapers; and I had the satisfaction to hit upon a plan, by which all that was really important might be effected without subjecting the department to any loss whatever; so that its adoption would imply a double gain, first, in adequate concession to those immediately interested; and, secondly, in making the special service self-supporting. By my plan newspapers, undirected, unfolded, and therefore, of course, without wrappers, would have been distributable by the Post Office much as is now done by news-agents. At the same time I pointed out how spare revenue might be advantageously employed in giving additional and very important facilities to the conveyance of letters. Throwing my views, as clearly and concisely as I could, into the form of a memorandum (see Appendix M), I sent this to Mr. Gladstone, who, in return, informed me, by his private secretary, that he had read it "with the greatest interest," and had sent it on to the Postmaster-General. Hearing nothing further, and finding that the question would be again raised in the Session of 1870, I wrote to the Chancellor of the

* 'Hansard,' vol. clviii. p. 1205.

Exchequer, Mr. Lowe, telling him of the memorandum, and offering to send him a copy. A letter from his private secretary, accepting this offer, is the last communication I ever received on the subject.

The course actually taken, viz., that of abolishing the limitation on weight and halving the postage, with no arrangement for economy in operation and no set-off, save what is implied in the abolition of the impressed stamp (in itself an important advantage, I acknowledge, one, indeed, for which I had often striven), largely increases a loss already great, and, what is still worse, greatly strengthens an example already mischievous. Its ultimate consequences it is impossible to predict. Demand has already arisen for the conveyance of other printed matter at the same rate, a demand which can plead in its support that such matter may, by existing rules, be detained to suit the convenience of the office, while newspapers must, of course, be forwarded at once. In short, I am myself quite unacquainted with any logic by which it can be maintained that while a newspaper weighing six or eight ounces is conveyed for a halfpenny, a letter weighing but half an ounce should be chargeable with a penny.

On a careful comparison of the two plans, I cannot but think that mine would have proved not only better for the Post Office, but also more acceptable to the publishers and newsvenders, because while the cost of transmission would have been practically the same, they could have been saved the great trouble of folding, covering, and addressing each separate copy; processes necessarily performed at a time when every minute is of great value. I may add that, as my plan is, in its essential features, independent of rates of postage, it may still be adopted without interfering with recent changes; nay, by relieving the Post Office of railway conveyance and sorting, the

cost of both of which is seriously augmented by increased weight and bulk, it would go far towards justifying the late innovation.

MODIFICATION OF POSTAGE RATE.

To another contemplated improvement I was myself, as will be seen, constrained to indicate obstacles which for the moment seemed insurmountable, though I had then no expectation that the obstruction would continue as it has done to the present day.

In October, 1859, Mr. Gladstone suggested a change in the rates of postage, reducing the charge for increased weight; on the just ground that this does not involve a proportionate increase of trouble. His conception had the advantage of extreme simplicity; his proposed rate being one penny for each letter, with an additional penny for each ounce in its weight. The question being referred to me by Lord Elgin, then Postmaster-General, I unfortunately found myself obliged, notwithstanding its intrinsic excellence, to object to its immediate adoption, far less on account of the direct loss to the revenue (estimated at about 50,000*l.* per annum), which doubtless, as in the case of other judicious improvements, would have been made up in the department or elsewhere, than because of apprehended difficulties with the railway companies, which would straightway have aggravated their oft-repeated charge of interference with their parcel traffic, and would have raised their demands accordingly; demands which no representations to the umpires had hitherto enabled us successfully to resist. Being, however, then in hope that legislation would soon secure the department against such overcharge, I recommended

delay; and to this Mr. Gladstone acceded, saying that he should retain my Report for future use. Unfortunately, however, such legislation has never yet been procured.

COMPLAINTS FROM WITHOUT.

I need not remark that no improvements, even when fully effected, have sufficed to put a stop to complaints from without. That the postal machine still partook and yet partakes of human imperfection these pages afford abundant evidence; but we have already seen that, in addition to such complaints as were well grounded, there were many that had no ground at all. Of these, some of the most noticeable will be found in the first eight Annual Reports; and of those so selected, one or two may be given as specimens here:—

'A merchant sent his errand boy to post a letter, and to purchase a stamp to put upon it. The letter contained negotiable bills amounting to 1,200*l.*, and as the merchant did not receive an acknowledgment from his correspondent, he cast the blame on the Post Office. An inquiry followed, which resulted in showing that the errand boy had met another boy on a similar mission, who undertook to post the letter in question. On further reflection, however, the latter resolved to convert the penny intended for a postage stamp into sweetmeats, which he did, and then destroyed the letter with its contents, carrying the fragments into a field near the Post Office, where they were found hidden.*

'It was alleged that a letter, containing a cheque for 12*l.* 4*s.*, sent to a London firm, had not reached its destination. After a lapse of three months, the letter was found at a papier-mâché factory, to which it had evidently been sent among waste paper, after having been duly delivered.†

'A person applied at the Leeds post office, and stated that two letters (one of which contained the half of a bank-note), which he had himself posted at that office, had not reached

* 'Third Annual Report,' p. 31. † 'Fifth Annual Report,' p. 49.

their destination; mentioning at the same time some circumstances associated with the alleged posting of the letters. After some conversation, he was requested to produce the letter which had informed him of the non-receipt of the letters in question; but instead of producing it, he, to his own great astonishment, took from his pocket the very letters which he believed he had himself posted.*

'A firm applied from time to time for missing letters addressed to them. After much inquiry it was at last found that there was a defect in the letter-box in their office door; and fifteen letters, some of which had been there more than nine years, were found between the box and the door.'†

Frequent, however, as were needless complaints, apology for the trouble and anxiety thereby occasioned was of rare occurrence. Still in some few instances there came a more than ample compensation, of which the following letter, from the Lord Chancellor of the day, the late Lord Cranworth, is a noteworthy example:—

'40, Upper Brook Street, 8th May, 1856.

'SIR,

'Complaints were made early in last month that a letter, posted by Mr. Anderson, of Lincoln's Inn, and addressed to me, had never reached its destination.

'Mr. Anderson gave the most convincing evidence that it had been posted, and I stated with confidence it had never reached me.

'You accordingly directed inquiries to be made. I feel it a duty to you, Sir, and to the Post Office authorities, to say that I have just found the missing letter, which has been accidentally buried under a heap of other papers.

'I have only to regret the trouble which my oversight thus caused, and to take the earliest opportunity of absolving all persons except myself of blame in the matter.

'I have, &c.,

'CRANWORTH.‡

'The Secretary of the Post Office.'

* 'Fifth Annual Report,' p. 50. † 'Sixth Annual Report,' p. 84.
‡ 'Third Annual Report,' p. 64.

Miscellaneous.

One of the most striking and impressive events of this period is thus mentioned in the Report for 1856:—

'In recording the chief events of last year, I must not omit the melancholy loss, by shipwreck, of the 'Violet' mail-packet, between Ostend and Dover; a catastrophe attributed at the time, in one of our public journals, to an undue strictness by the department in requiring mail-packets to put to sea at the appointed time, even in a violent storm.

'I need scarcely say that no such rule exists, and that no such orders had been given. It would certainly be the duty of the captain of a mail-packet not to allow slight obstacles to cause delay; but on this point we may always fully rely on the courage and sense of duty of a British commander.

'Mr. Mortleman, the officer in immediate charge of the mail-bags, acted on the occasion with a presence of mind and forethought which reflect honour on his memory. On seeing that the vessel could not be saved, he must have removed the cases containing the mail-bags from the hold, and have so placed them, that when the ship went down they might float; a proceeding which ultimately led to the recovery of all the bags, except one containing despatches, of which, from their nature, it was possible to obtain copies. I may add, that a similar spirit of determination to perform their duty to the last has, on several previous occasions of exposure to imminent danger, distinguished the conduct of our officers.'*

The following passage from the same page records, not for the first time, foreign aid kindly given under casualty:—

'An instance, calling for grateful acknowledgment on my part [it is the Duke of Argyll who speaks], occurred last year, of prompt and gratuitous assistance given by two foreign Governments in the conveyance of a large mail from India, which was on board a ship belonging to the Peninsular and

* 'Third Annual Report,' p. 33.

Oriental Steam Navigation Company bound for Southampton, when, owing to an accident to the machinery, the vessel became unable to proceed. The casualty happened near Tunis; and the Bey gave immediate orders for a steam-vessel in his own service to be got ready to convey both the mail and passengers, without cost, to Marseilles, which was accordingly done; and from Marseilles the mail was, by the French Government, forwarded gratuitously to Calais; whereas, under ordinary circumstances, a mail of the same weight would for this part of the journey alone have entailed a charge of more than 800*l.*'

It has been mentioned that our number of letters in 1857 was more than 500,000,000; the following passage shows very strikingly that the correspondence of a country is not always according to its population:—

'According to an official return in a recent number of the "Journal de Saint Petersbourg," giving various Russian postal statistics for the year 1855, the whole number of letters posted in Russia was about 16,400,000, or almost exactly the same as the number posted in the single city of Manchester and its suburbs.'*

It will be remembered that one of the changes made on the establishment of penny postage was the total abolition of franking, and some account has been given of the monstrous abuses which existed under that pernicious system. As germane to the matter, I quote the following from Hansard; the passage being also curious as recording, I believe, the last attack ever made on penny postage within the walls of Parliament:—

'*June* 22*nd*, 1857.—*Government Postage.*

'On the motion that 88,045*l.* be voted for the postage of Government letters,

'*Mr. Bentinck* suggested that it would be better to return to the system of franking, adding that he had always thought

* 'Fourth Annual Report,' p. 17.

that the Penny Post Act was one of the greatest jobs ever perpetrated, and one of the greatest financial mistakes ever committed by the country.

'*Sir Francis Baring*, in reply, suggested that the hon. gentleman should try to bring back the old rates of postage, and he would then see what was the feeling of the country with regard to the penny rate; * * * that the accounts ought to show the amount of service performed by the Post Office, and the charge was brought into the estimates in order to put a stop at once to the gross abuse of official franks. He was inclined to think that abuse was carried to an enormous extent, and he was afraid if they gave the public offices the right of franking the same abuse would recur.

'*Mr. Roebuck* said there were two objects in voting this money, to know what was expended, and to check persons spending more than necessary. The appearance of this item prevented any abuse of the Post Office machinery. The "Ambassadors' bag" in past times had been sadly weighted. Coats, lace, boots, and other articles were sent by it, even a pianoforte; and not only a pianoforte, but a horse.'*

I hear with great concern that in the present year (1868) the old practice has been in some sort restored at the various Government offices previously enjoying the privilege, and even extended to such as never had it before; the whole change being doubly injurious, since, in addition to the evil tendencies already adverted to, it gives to the estimates of expenditure in the various offices a delusive appearance, to the extent, in the aggregate, of about 200,000*l.* a year, the annual expenses of those offices and the real earnings of the Post Office being alike understated by that amount.†

Before quitting the Reports from which I have drawn so largely, I must mention that the historic

* 'Hansard,' vol. cxlvi. p. 188, 189.

† It is important to observe that the amount actually paid by Government for its postage before the abolition of franking was less, in proportion to the amount of its correspondence, than that paid after the abolition.

sketch of the English Post Office already referred to is followed in the Second and Third Reports by an equally curious account of the old postal system in Scotland and Ireland; and I can safely add that each of the three will well repay perusal.

As I was so deeply interested in postal affairs, so much alive to the importance of accuracy, and so well aware in what this consisted, it was naturally to be expected that in my own person, at least, I should avoid all postal blunders, and not unreasonable to suppose that the care so incumbent on me should be almost equally felt by my wife. The following shows that these natural expectations were not always fulfilled. A letter of pressing importance having to be written to Wolverhampton, my wife undertook the part of scribe; while to secure the despatch I volunteered to post the letter when written. The respective duties having been performed to the satisfaction of each party, much disappointment and perplexity were felt when the expected reply failed to arrive. Relief, however, soon came, though I cannot say that we were much elated by the explanation, the letter which had been the object of our joint care being brought into my room at the Office, from the Dead Letter Department, as having been posted without address!

An account of my proceedings, prefaced with a sketch of my previous life, appeared in 1859, in 'Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper;'* and will be found also, with some corrections, in 'Our Exemplars,' Cassell, 1861. This was written, at the request of the publisher, by my brother Matthew; and from the care with which facts are selected, and the clearness and force with which they are stated, it will well suffice to such readers as lack either time or inclination for the perusal of a longer narrative. It is to be regretted,

* January 8th and 15th, 1859.

however, that the closing paragraph of this article was so altered by the editor, without any reference to my brother, as to make it seriously erroneous.

Three years afterwards, in a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, Albemarle Street, my brother gave a more detailed account of the postal reforms effected not only by myself but by my predecessors in that work; bringing down the narrative to the time when the lecture was delivered. I give this in the Appendix N. The lecture was, indeed, afterwards published in 'Fraser's Magazine,' for September, 1862; but in the Appendix results are brought up in notes to the present time (1869).

CHAPTER XV.

POSTMASTERS-GENERAL, 1855 TO 1860.

LORD CANNING.

TOWARDS the close of 1855 I learnt with extreme regret of the approaching withdrawal of Lord Canning, just then appointed Governor-General of India; my only consolation being the conviction that in the high and arduous duties, the almost awful responsibility to which he was now called, the great talents, high principles, strict conscientiousness, and unwearied industry, with which I had happily been brought into such intimate relation, would extend to a vast empire the benefits they had conferred on a single department.

The close of his career as Postmaster-General was highly characteristic. For some reason it was convenient to the Government that he should retain his office until the very day of his departure for the East. Doubtless it was expected that this retention would be little more than nominal, or that, at most, he would attend to none but the most pressing business, leaving to his successor all such affairs as admitted of delay; and when I found that he continued to transact business just as usual, while I knew that he must be encumbered with every kind of preparation, official, personal and domestic, I earnestly pressed that course upon him, but in vain; he would leave no arrears, and every question, great

or small, which he had been accustomed to decide, was submitted to him as usual, to the last hour of his remaining in the country. Nor was decision even then made heedlessly or hurriedly, but, as before, after full understanding; an attainment, however, the easier to him because of his remarkable quickness of apprehension, which enabled him to seize one's conceptions almost more rapidly than they could be set forth; and I may add that with this happy quality he combined the invaluable power of perceiving, as it were by intuition, how ideas supplied for a special case might be made applicable to general purposes.

Of his eminent services in India it is not for me to speak, but, as an instance of attention to matters of detail, I may mention what I afterwards learnt from Lord Elgin, that at the period of his greatest labour and anxiety, viz., in the very height of the mutiny, he wrote long minutes with his own hand. I had always remarked his very strict attention to the precise wording of the papers he was called upon to sign, and indeed often thought it overstrained, but I believe he had at once an earnest desire that his exact meaning should be made clear, and a most delicate perception of the difference produced by the slightest variation of terms. In common with the whole world I regarded his premature death as a severe national calamity. He was earnest and energetic in the moral reform of the Post Office, and, had his life been longer spared, might perhaps have been the moral reformer of India.

DUKE OF ARGYLL.

I must not be supposed, however, to imply that the Department was unhappy in its new chief, since the Duke of Argyll showed in his office powers not unworthy of his distinguished predecessor, combined

with equal diligence and equal conscientiousness. In him I found a no less striking quickness of apprehension and promptitude in generalization, while his facility in composition struck me with amazement. It would sometimes happen that in a case where he deemed it indispensable to reply to an application by an autograph letter, he received from me a long and complicated verbal explanation, involving much of technicality and detail, and then sat down and wrote off sheet after sheet, which, when handed to me for perusal, showed that he had completely mastered the subject, and had set it forth with admirable force and clearness. This latter part of his performance was the more wonderful to me because of my own deficiency, for I have always found the satisfactory exposition of a new plan far more difficult than its device or its elaboration.

I have only to add that I was sorry when his tenure of office came to a close. He left what is, I believe, very unusual, a written expression of regret at separation. His letter was as follows :—

'Post Office, February 27, 1858.

'My dear Sir,

'I hope to see you on Monday at the Office, when I shall probably introduce my successor to yourself and the assistant secretaries.

'Meanwhile I must express to you my regret on account of the change which removes me from official intercourse with you. I have had much satisfaction in that intercourse. It is a great pleasure to work in an office where every question is so thoroughly and carefully considered as by you; and you have every reason to be satisfied with the invaluable social benefits which you have been the means of conferring upon the people, through the Office with which you have been so long connected.

'I am, my dear Sir,

'Yours very truly,

'Argyll.'

LORD COLCHESTER.

Lord Colchester, who succeeded the Duke of Argyll on the change of administration in March 1858, I found an earnest and painstaking man, diligent in the careful perusal of all minutes submitted to him, and even of the enclosures (often dry and lengthy) with which they were necessarily accompanied; patient in listening to any suggestion, however new, and to any details, however complicated; and ready to adopt any improvement. Of all those under whom I served no one was kinder in manner, or showed more consideration for the feelings of others. Last, and not least, he had a positive detestation for every kind of job, and made no hesitation to resist pressure on this subject from whatever quarter.

LORD ELGIN.

Lord Elgin, who entered office in June, 1859, I regarded as a very able administrator, equally diligent, candid and trustful with his predecessor, and remarkably calm and dispassionate in his judgments. On entering upon his office, he said he wished to explain what he thought should be the relation between himself and me. In details he did not intend to interfere at all, thinking that the head of a department might better employ his time than in dealing with these; but, before determining to go further, he had thought it his duty to make careful inquiry as to whether I were a man on whose advice full reliance could be placed; and being satisfied on that point, he intended to throw the responsibility upon me—at least until he should have performed the long, difficult, and perhaps impossible task of making himself acquainted with the immense details of the Department—by acting on my recommendation

on all points, save perhaps in some exceptional case, where he should see strong reason to the contrary. Happily, to the best of my recollection, no such exception ever occurred. I have only to add that his kindness of manner accorded with the fulness of his confidence.

With 1859 closed the twentieth year since my entrance into the service of the Government in relation to Post Office management; or, striking out the years during which I had been excluded from my work, the sixteenth of my actual service in that department. During this time, as may be remembered, I had served under Mr. Baring and Mr. Goulburn at the Treasury, Lord Clanricarde, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Canning, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Colchester, and Lord Elgin, at the Post Office.

Whoever has followed me thus far will have perceived that my estimation of my successive superiors, whether correct or otherwise, has varied considerably; but I believe all will agree that I may justly regard myself as having been, on the whole, very fortunate; as having had to deal, for the most part, with great intelligence, zeal, and honour, and as having met with almost unvarying courtesy and kindness, and not unfrequently enjoyed firm and courageous support: I must add my full belief that, had the power rested with my immediate superiors, I should have escaped the long interruption to my tenure of office, and have been spared the greater part of that protracted and exhausting contest which undermined my health.

It was not, however, until the last year of this period that I began to feel that permanent failure in strength which, combined with other circumstances, compelled me five years afterwards to withdraw at once and finally from my post. In this year (1859) after a careful consultation on my case by three

eminent medical men, it was laid down that henceforth I must limit my days of work to four in the week.

Amidst anxiety on this point, however, I had the satisfaction of believing myself pretty firmly established in public opinion, and in the confidence of Government. Two years before I had, without any movement whatever on my part, been elected a member of the Royal Society, my recommendation being signed by the Duke of Argyll, the Astronomer Royal, Sir Roderick Murchison, and Messrs. De La Rue, Lassell, Sylvester, Webster, Wheatstone, and several other distinguished members; this honour being followed a year later by my admission to that inner circle, the Royal Society Club. The mover in this case was my warm-hearted friend the late Admiral Smyth, as is shown by the following characteristic letters:—

'St. John's Lodge, near Aylesbury, 24/4/58.

'My dear Sir,

'I have presumed to take a liberty for which I now solicit a pardon.

'I need not here enter into a detail of the Royal Society Club, because you are no doubt aware of its merits. The anniversary of this Club (*its* 115*th*) is now fast approaching, and as there will probably be a vacancy, I girded up at the dinner last Thursday, and formally proposed you as a candidate. The deed is now done, and no compunction visits

'Yours always truly,

'W. H. Smyth.'

'The Athenæum, June 24, 1858.

'Duly elected a member of the Royal Society Club—

'Rowland Hill, Esq.,

to the great gratification of the said Club, and especially so to

'W. H. Smyth.'

Later still, viz., in 1867, I had the honour to be

elected a member of the Council, though increasing infirmity soon compelled me to withdraw.

Early in 1860, the twenty-fourth year, I may observe, from that in which my attention was first seriously turned to the reform of the Post Office, Her Majesty was pleased to confer upon me the honour of Knight Commander of the Bath; an honour at once unsolicited and unexpected. The first notification of this gracious intention was received in the following letter from Lord Elgin, then Postmaster-General:—

'30th January, 1860.

'My dear Mr. Hill,

'I beg leave to inclose for your perusal a note which I have received from Lord Palmerston.

'Permit me at the same time to assure you of the great pleasure which I experience in conveying to you this proof of Her Majesty's appreciation of your distinguished services.

'Very sincerely yours,

'Elgin and Kincardine.'

[*Enclosure.*]

'94 Piccadilly, 30th January, 1860.

'My dear Lord Elgin,

'I have much pleasure in informing you that the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of Mr. Rowland Hill being made a Knight Commander of the Civil Order of the Bath.

'Yours sincerely,

'Palmerston.'

To these letters I of course returned a suitable reply, expressive of my thanks for the honour done me. By a pleasing coincidence, of which I was, however, at the moment quite unaware, the honour of C.B. was conferred at the time of my formal installation on one of my former pupils, Major Beecher, for important services in India. My new dignity brought

me numerous letters of congratulation from various quarters, far and near, high and low.

The close of the period which I have been describing found the Department in a highly satisfactory state. The various improvements which had been effected since progress had become unembarrassed were already producing very manifest results. The public convenience had been in many ways promoted, and various arrangements for its further extension were in steady progress; the revenue, already large, gave every promise of continued increase; the numerous improvements in relation to the health, comfort, and remuneration of the staff, and above all the rule of promotion by absolute merit—modified only by seniority in cases where merit was equal—now recognised as in full force, had gradually diffused such a spirit throughout the Department as seemed to have secured vigorous and harmonious action. All, in short, was working smoothly;* and I well remember the satisfaction which Mr. Tilley, the senior Assistant Secretary, who up to this time had uniformly given me, as already shown, earnest and efficient support, expressed at the general state of the service, so different from what he had once known; remarking that now every one seemed to do his duty as a matter of course. I did not then foresee how serious a change was at hand. Of this, however, I shall speak but very briefly.

LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY.

In February, 1860, there came upon me that severe illness of which I have more than once spoken by anticipation; an illness which, commencing with forty-eight hours of nearly continuous insensibility,

* 'Sixth Annual Report,' pp. 38 and 39.

not only confined me to my house and prostrated my bodily strength, but, what was far worse, rendered me for a long time quite incapable of any serious mental action, save by such spasmodic effort as was at once both painful and injurious for the present, and hazardous for the future. In short, I was compelled to be absent from duty, with but little exception, and that only under imperative necessity, for several months. Fondly believing that the peaceful state just spoken of would endure, I did not anticipate any very serious positive consequences from my absence, though, of course, I knew it must delay the progress of improvement. Circumstances, however, proved untoward. Lurking discontent was fanned into a flame by a breath from without; and this, occurring during my disability, gave opportunity for the revival of those cabals, higher up in the office, which had so frequently interfered with good order, and made improvement difficult. At this critical period the office of Postmaster-General unfortunately became vacant, by the appointment of Lord Elgin to the Governor-Generalship of India, and for a time there was a sort of interregnum, during which the duties of the office were provisionally discharged by the Duke of Argyll, who, however, had at the same time other demands on his attention; and when, at length, a permanent appointment was made, in the person of Lord Stanley of Alderley, I had not the good fortune to obtain from him that confidence and support which I had enjoyed with his predecessors. I will not now dwell upon what followed. The facts are upon record, and the time may come when it will be proper that they should appear. Let it suffice for the present to say that I had to oppose a fourth cabal; had again—and now without the support from the head of the Department which I had previously received

—to enter into contests—contests ever increasing in severity, which I had no longer the strength to maintain; and that, after a series of fruitless efforts, I found my health so grievously and hopelessly impaired as to compel me seriously to consider the question of final retirement from that important and almost absorbing task in which I had so long been engaged.

Before proceeding, however, to this concluding part of my narrative I must give some account of the improvements effected in the interim. Of course in a period of such difficulty the progress of improvement was comparatively slow; and though the Department continued steadily to advance in its fiscal results, and in its beneficial effects on public convenience, this was due in a much higher degree to past reforms than to changes made at the time.

CHAPTER XVI.

PROGRESS AFTER 1859.

SAVINGS BANKS.

THE plan of Post Office Savings Banks, already mentioned as having been brought before the public and the Government most prominently by Mr. Sykes of Huddersfield, had, through the energetic efforts of Mr. Gladstone, been provided for, in the year 1860, by Act of Parliament. It was speedily brought into operation in England and Wales, and was extended early in the following year to Scotland and Ireland.

As this new department was of necessity closely connected with the Money Order Office, its secretarial management devolved, in the ordinary course, on my brother Frederic; who, before proceeding to the work of organization, recommended that this should be based upon the contract system; a measure which would have been highly economical, but would obviously have involved the abandonment of attendant patronage. This recommendation, however, did not find favour with the Postmaster-General, and the department was soon afterwards transferred to Mr. Tilley. Together with this great measure of economy were rejected other means proposed by myself. In short, operation was made so expensive, that while a money order costs the department in issue and payment but threepence, every transaction in the savings bank, whether deposit or withdrawal, costs sevenpence.

The full evil of such increase in current expense

will appear when it is considered what, under strictly economical management, these savings banks might become. Their chief avowed object is, and most assuredly should be, to give the largest justifiable encouragement to popular thrift; and to this, as I conceive, every other aim should be completely subordinated. To this end it is important to induce, by all reasonable means, the greatest amount of deposit, but incomparably less important, if indeed at all desirable, to give more than reasonable facility for withdrawal; and certainly there is no just ground for extending and multiplying such facility at the expense of the department; especially seeing that the necessary consequence is a reduction in that rate of interest whose amount constitutes a main inducement to depositors; so that the effect is to mulct the steady depositors for the convenience of the more changeable. Had the Post Office been able to offer the same rate of interest as the old savings banks, its absolute security, combined with a reasonable and inexpensive increase of facility for the transaction of business would not only have soon brought to it the whole actual amount of the savings bank business (of which at present it has but about one fourth), but in all probability would have extended the increase in thrift, which, with all defects, it has actually produced, to a degree corresponding with the hopes of its most zealous advocates; and in particular of the benevolent gentleman in whose earnest suggestion it took its rise. Before the arrangements were finally adopted, I urged my views as to excess of expense and consequent prejudice to revenue, in an elaborate letter, on the Postmaster-General. Some small change for the better was made, but, high as the estimate still remained, it has been exceeded by the actual expense, though the Annual Reports would seem to show otherwise.

With all drawbacks, however, the institution may safely be pronounced a great national benefit. The number of Post Office savings banks in the United Kingdom by the end of the year 1861 was nearly four-fold the maximum number of savings banks existing under the old system,* and is now (1869) as high as six-fold.† It is important also to observe that the number of small deposits is more than proportionately increased; a fact obviously tending to show that this important means of thrift has been made more available to that class in which economy is at once most difficult and yet most desirable.

'This gratifying result,' says the Eighth Annual Report, 'is doubtless attributable to the superior facilities given by the Post Office banks; and especially to the fact that they are open daily and for several hours, and that they are situated almost at the door of the depositor.'‡

The new institution also proves very convenient to friendly societies, charitable societies and penny banks, which avail themselves of its benefits in considerable numbers.

Fear had been expressed during the progress of the bill through Parliament that the sub-postmasters would fail to carry out the details of the measure; but it was found that—

'The postmasters throughout the country have lent themselves cheerfully and readily to the work, and instead of merely carrying out their instructions perfunctorily, and in ordinary course, have exerted themselves to make known and to explain the advantages of the Post Office Savings Banks, and to facilitate, so far as lay in their power, the transactions of the poorer depositors.'§

* 'Eighth Annual Report,' pp. 12, 13, 14.
† 'Fifteenth Annual Report,' p. 16.
‡ 'Eighth Annual Report,' p. 14.
§ 'Eighth Annual Report,' p. 15.

Any of my readers desirous of further information on this subject may refer with advantage to an interesting work on the 'History of Savings Banks,' by Mr. William Lewins, already mentioned as author of 'Her Majesty's Mails.'*

REGISTRATION.

In the year 1862 an important improvement was made in the matter of registration. It may be remembered that my urgent advocacy of the lowering of the fee from one shilling to sixpence, in opposition to the opinion of Lord Lowther appeared to be the immediate cause of my dismissal from the Treasury by the Government of Sir Robert Peel; but that I easily succeeded in obtaining that important reduction after my appointment to the Post Office by the Government of Lord John Russell: as also that the change was followed by a large increase in the number of registered letters, and a corresponding diminution in the amount of loss by dishonesty or negligence within the Office. Of course, however, even the lower fee proved a stumbling-block to some persons, and, notwithstanding all remonstrance from the Post Office, the practice of sending coin in unregistered letters, though diminished, was by no means extinct; so that losses were still reported; and, what was far worse, sorters and letter-carriers were exposed to needless temptation, and individuals of their number occasionally subjected to undue suspicion. It was consequently resolved, with the sanction of the Treasury, to make the registration of coin-bearing letters compulsory; a double fee being charged where the duty was omitted by the sender; while, to give a compensatory advantage, the registration fee was universally reduced from sixpence to fourpence. Even with this

* Sampson Low and Co.

mitigation, however, there was considerable anxiety in the Department as to the light in which compulsory registration would be viewed by the public; but Lord Stanley of Alderley, then Postmaster-General, being anything rather than deficient in courage, readily encountered the risk, and the result justified his boldness; the speedy consequence being a large increase in the number of registered letters, and a very great decrease in the number of alleged losses. It may be added that the near approach to absolute security obtained by registration was shown by the fact that out of about nine hundred thousand registered letters posted in the United Kingdom, whether for delivery at home or abroad, during the latter half of 1862, the whole number lost was only twelve.*

PATTERN POST.

In the last year of this period the pattern post was established. This was done at the express desire of the Postmaster-General. My own wish was to make it part of that more extensive arrangement which I have already mentioned under the name of Parcels Post; my chief objection to the more partial scheme being the difficulty sure to arise as to the definition of a pattern. As, however, I was not then in a state of health to surmount immediately the many obstacles to the more comprehensive scheme, and as Lord Stanley was impatient of delay, the more limited plan was adopted and carried into effect.

* 'Ninth Annual Report,' p. 10.

PACKET SERVICE.

Transference from Admiralty.

The last improvements of which I shall speak here belong to a department which, though always important, has been placed by recent circumstances (1869) in an extraordinary light. The packet service, it will be remembered, had, under the management of the Admiralty, become a source of very great expense; attributable partly to the fact of its extension, for political reasons, very far beyond the requirements of the Post Office. As such special extension had ceased, it was obviously desirable, as fast as possible, to bring the expense within such limits as would render the service self-supporting, and thereby relieve the British tax-payer from a needless burden. Opportunity was given for such improvement by the transference of the service from the Admiralty to the Post Office; a change made in the year 1860. Of course progress could be but slow, seeing that existing contracts had to be respected; but steps were promptly taken to put the department in readiness for availing itself of opportunities as they should occur. The secretarial charge of the department was from the first placed in the hands of my brother; who, it may be remembered, already had like charge of the foreign and colonial departments, and, it may be added, had previously performed such secretarial duties relative to this service as even then devolved on the Post Office.

Improvement in Tenders.

His first move was, as already intimated, so to frame the tenders as, in effect, to analyse the charges hitherto made in the gross; to show how much was

demanded for the main duty, and how much for its various adjuncts; and by this means to ascertain how far the various details of any particular service justified the expense of their additional maintenance. The value of such analysis may be exemplified by stating that one consequence was to reduce the annual expense to the Home Government of conveying the mails to and from Honduras from 8,000*l.* to 2,000*l.*; eventually, indeed, to 1,500*l.*

Discontinuance of Surveys.

A yet more important measure, however, as being even more general in its operation, was to relieve contractors from the Admiralty surveys previously insisted upon, and to limit the demand to a stipulation—under adequate penalties—that the service should be regularly performed within a given time. It was not without much difficulty that the sanction of the Postmaster-General was obtained to so great a change, fear naturally arising as to the consequence of abandoning a rule hitherto regarded as essential, and which, moreover, was strongly supported by the naval superintendent of the time at the port of Southampton. The measure, however, was in full accordance with the spirit of Lord Canning's Report on the packet service, and, before it was recommended, good assurance had been received that the alterations required by the Admiralty, though often attended with heavy expense, really tended to render the vessels employed less fit for the performance of their special service. In fine, the measure, with a contingent reserve, seldom, if ever, acted upon, was carried into effect; and, so far as I can learn, has never to this time (1869) given rise to a single complaint. Its pecuniary benefit was exemplified by a tender subsequently made for a particular

service by Sir Edward Cunard; the effect being to reduce the annual charge from 23,000*l.* to 19,000*l.*; a saving which, when viewed in relation to the whole packet service, rises into great importance, since the benefit derivable from the change, when universally applied, cannot be estimated at less than 200,000*l.* a year.

Readjustment of Transmarine Rates.

Concurrently with these and other measures for reducing the cost of the service, my brother sought to do something towards meeting its inevitable expense by a moderate increase of postage in quarters where the charges for conveyance were proportionately the heaviest. Experience had shown that, where transmission necessarily occupies a long time, increase of correspondence depends far less on lowered rates than on increased speed and frequency of transmission. He felt, moreover, that it could not be just to call upon the British tax-payers generally to pay exorbitantly for advantages specially appertaining to those more directly interested in foreign and colonial correspondence; that every branch of the postal service ought to be self-supporting; and the false principle of protection to particular interests entirely shut out. At the same time, to meet the convenience of those who required cheapness rather than speed, he proposed a concurrent reduction on all letters sent by ordinary trading vessels; a mode of conveyance involving very little expense. A change so doubtful of acceptance, though so sound in principle, Lord Stanley of Alderley, then Postmaster-General, had the courage to adopt; and it received the cordial approbation of Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Fiscal Benefits.

The effect of these combined measures is most strongly exemplified in the service to the Cape of Good Hope and Natal; the loss on which was reduced in six years from about 28,000*l.* to about 5,400*l.* per annum.

In fine, I believe that the large annual loss involved in the foreign and colonial packet service was actually reduced during the time that the department was in my brother's hands by more than 200,000*l.*; 100,000*l.* being saved by reduced expenditure, and the like sum gained by increased yield from the correspondence; while the cost to the British tax-payer was further diminished by the extension of arrangements previously adopted for calling upon the colonies, once exempt from all expense of transmission, to bear their just share of the charge.

Increased Punctuality.

Whilst thus successfully striving for increased economy, my brother also took measures for improving the service. By a system of exact accounts he obtained quarterly tables showing at a glance how each line of packets stood with respect to punctuality, together with the length of its quickest and of its slowest voyage; so as to have ground of comparison with subsequent performances. He also introduced into all new contracts a stipulation for penalties to be levied in cases of over time. Lastly, while the Annual Report was in his hands, he was careful that, whenever a service was performed with great credit, the Report should contain due notice of the fact; attestations which could not but act beneficially on the subsequent performances

of the respective companies; the directors of which showed, indeed, the value they attached to such recognitions by quoting them in their reports to the shareholders. To complete this matter, I may here state that so striking was the effect gradually produced by these various measures, that, in the last quarter during which the department was under my brother's superintendence, viz., that ending September 30th, 1867, there were, as I learn, only twenty instances of a packet arriving after its time; while those of arrival before time were no less than two hundred and twenty-seven.

Large Expenditure Prevented.

The last great service performed by my brother in this department, which, for the sake of completing the subject, I mention here by anticipation, consisted in the defeat of an attempt to draw the British Government into the adoption of such changes in the Australian service as, without any appreciable improvement in its efficiency, would have subjected the mother country to an increased annual expense of about 114,000*l.* The proposal, which was drawn up with great art, and which, under show of certain advantages, really aimed at diverting the main burden of expense from certain of the colonies to the mother country, required for its exposure a sound knowledge of principles, and no less a thorough acquaintance with the facts of the case. For all this my brother was so well prepared as to be able, after a careful consideration of the whole subject, to prepare a minute, necessarily of great length, exposing the fallacies of the plan and justifying its rejection; and this minute, being approved by the Postmaster-General of the day (the Duke of Montrose), and confirmed by the Treasury, was sent out with but little

change in its words to the colonies concerned, where it appears to have settled the question.

Tory Reward for Faithful Services.

This important minute was written in the year 1867, about three years after my resignation. While, however, my brother was quietly rejoicing at the success with which he had surmounted these serious difficulties, and dwelling, perhaps, with some natural gratification on two recent minutes in which the Duke of Montrose, then Postmaster-General, had recorded his satisfaction with the financial results of the packet service during the time it had been under his management, and with the state of perfection into which that service had been brought; while, moreover, he was taking measures for further improvements of great importance for which opportunity was rapidly approaching—in the midst of all this gratifying retrospection and pleasing anticipation a change was preparing which soon put all such thoughts to flight. Will it be believed that in the course of the same year, nay, within a few months from the date alike of the despatch to Australia and of the Postmaster-General's gratifying minutes, the whole packet service was withdrawn from my brother's charge and placed in other hands? The motive assigned by his Grace was that Mr. Frederic Hill's views were opposed to those of the Postmaster-General, Mr. Tilley, and the Treasury. No positive act of opposition was alleged or even hinted at, my brother's proceedings in the matter having been limited to statements and arguments set forth in minutes to his Grace; while, to judge by all his antecedents, he was ready, as indeed he was bound, to obey any injunction, and to carry out any announced wish of his official superior,

however little these might be in accordance with his own opinion.

The consequences of the change, it must be added, were far more speedy than satisfactory. Within a year the cost of the service, which under his management had been gradually reduced by about 100,000*l.*, was augmented by little less than 300,000*l.*; and I may add that, but for such interposition as for a short time he was still allowed to make, the increase, great as it was, would in all probability have been greater still.*

Excess of zeal, especially in relation to principle, being, as all the world knows, often an offence of the first magnitude in official eyes, deprivation of high employment was soon followed by loss of position; my brother's junior being raised over his head, and a new organization established in the department, in which his office has no place whatever; the whole being done without any allegation against his services.

I confidently hoped that the return of the Liberals to power, even if too late to prevent the loss to the revenue (which was but partially the case), would at least have redressed the wrong; the more so, as

* The following passage from Sir C. W. Dilke's valuable work 'Greater Britain,' published since the above was written, throws further light on the retrogressive course in question:—

'Writing for the Englishmen of Old England, it is not necessary for me to defend free trade by any arguments. As far as we in our island are concerned, it is so manifestly to the pocket-interest of almost all of us, and, at the same time, on account of the minuteness of our territory, so little dangerous, politically, that for Britain there can be no fear of a deliberate relapse into protection, although we have but little right to talk about free trade so long as we continue our enormous subsidies to the Cunard liners.

'The American argument in favour of prohibition is, in the main, it will be seen, political; the economical objections being admitted, but outweighed. Our action in the matter of our postal contracts, and in the case of the Factory Acts, at all events shows that we are not ourselves invariably averse to distinguish between the political and the economical aspect of certain questions.' ('Greater Britain,' second edition, p. 69.)

Mr. Gladstone had about five years before, that is when the packet service had been for three years in my brother's management, expressed great admiration of the independent and economical way in which it was conducted; but my most earnest representations on the subject have produced, at best, but little change, and elicited no explanation. I can only suppose that the Premier is so entirely occupied with the difficult and most important measures now pressing on his attention as to have no time or strength for lesser matters.

CHAPTER XVII.

RESIGNATION. (1864.)

I RETURN to the year 1864, and to my personal narrative.

The necessity for my withdrawal was the more disappointing because I knew that I had the full confidence and even sympathy of the head of that department to which the Post Office is subordinate. Not to dwell on private evidence of this fact—which, however, is abundant—I may mention that Mr. Gladstone, in a lecture delivered in January, 1864, said (I quote from the 'Morning Post'):—

> 'That owing chiefly to the enlightened and benevolent labours of Sir Rowland Hill, it [the Post Office] had become capable of discharging with perfect efficiency many functions besides that which was its primary purpose. The Post Office has, in fact, become a great banking institution.'

This confidence, however, was not sufficiently near for my support; and in my immediate department the ground was slipping from beneath my feet. The chief point I was striving to maintain was that of promotion at once by absolute merit, and in faithful accordance with the requirements of the department. The rules by which this was maintained had to an important extent been of late set aside; all my resistance to the change being overborne. My appointment having been made by the Treasury, I had thought myself justified in appealing directly to

that higher authority; and I now learnt for the first time (February 6th, 1864) that such appeal had been condemned by the Postmaster-General, who at the same time denied in general terms my alleged appointment by the Treasury, maintaining that "all appointments in the Post Office without distinction are made by the Postmaster-General, and him alone." I had even gone so far (on the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone) as twice to solicit and obtain an interview with the Premier, Lord Palmerston; and though on the first occasion received in the most friendly manner, and listened to with great patience, and even obtaining some little support, I became convinced on the second interview that I had no hope of effectual aid from that quarter. In short, matters had ere this come into such a state that it was in effect impracticable for me to retain my actual position; and indeed, at the time of which I am now writing, viz., the beginning of 1864, no change, I am afraid, would have availed; my strength being already exhausted. The last six months I had passed in vacation; for which I had applied in the hope that such a period of rest might so far recruit my health as to enable me to hold on in the hope of better times; but at the close of the period I was but too sensible that this end had not been attained. Still I was willing to learn how far the official change which alone could give relief might be looked forward to as probable; and with this view, towards the close of my recess, viz., on February 10th, 1864, I called on my friend, Mr. Moffatt, whose opinion, however, I found altogether adverse to such expectation; and on my informing him of the state of my health, he strongly advised me not to think of returning to duty. On the following day, therefore, I consulted two of my medical friends, each of whom gave it as his opinion that return to the Post Office would be

attended with risk to my life. After conferring with the various members of my family, some of whom were much concerned at the thought of my absolute retirement, I procured a consultation of all my medical advisers, four in number; and after examination of myself, and private consultation with each other, they communicated their opinion through the mouth of their senior, Dr. (now Sir Thomas) Watson, an opinion which is thus recorded in my journal :—

'They were unanimously of opinion that for me to return to the Post Office would be attended with serious risk of life, and they hoped that I would altogether abandon any such intention; that I had accomplished a great work, and they hoped that I would make up my mind to rest for the future; that, with rest, and with such pleasant occupation as they had no doubt I could find, they had every reason to believe I should, to a considerable extent, regain my health and strength. He added that he had been informed by the others, confidentially, that certain changes had been made at the Post Office, which, in my opinion, would add to my difficulties if I returned; but that, under any circumstances, their opinion was against such return. The question of an extension of leave of absence having been raised, Dr. Watson, supported by the others, earnestly advised that the main question should now be finally decided, as they considered it very important, in the state of my health, that all doubt on the subject should be removed. They afterwards gave the following certificate :—

"16, Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square,
"February 18th, 1864.

"We certify that the state of Sir Rowland Hill's health is such as to render it unsafe for him to resume his duties at the Post Office."

In yielding to the necessity thus falling upon me, I had some comfort in knowing that I left behind me, in addition to several men of tried zeal and ability in their respective stations, a few on whose zeal, talent, and earnest support of my plans, I could

implicitly rely, the chief of these being my brother and my son; for though I feared that under existing circumstances their efforts would be comparatively unavailing, yet I trusted they would have strength to endure until the return of better times. Unfortunately while my trust in their firmness has been fully justified, my hope seems as far as ever from fulfilment.

My whole family now concurring in the necessity of the contemplated step, I called (February 25th) on Mr. Moffatt, and afterwards on the Chancellor of the Exchequer: the latter interview is thus recorded in my journal:—

'Gladstone greatly regrets my determination to resign. Presses upon me an offer to arrange for another six months' absence, with a clear understanding that I do not return to the Post Office while Lord Stanley of Alderley is there. At his urgent request, promised to reconsider the question.'

I fulfilled this promise, but could not venture to change my determination.

Before sending in my resignation, however, I thought it due to Mr. Gladstone to wait upon him and state the reasons which compelled me to take this step, as also to warn him of the evils that must follow some of the changes then in progress at the Post Office. Mr. Gladstone, receiving me with much kindness and evincing great sympathy, expressed his readiness to do anything in his power that might enable me to remain; but, while sincerely thanking him for all his kindness past and present, I was obliged to say that measures of relief, even if practicable, were now too late. Thus ended my last official interview with that distinguished statesman.

My letter of resignation, which was addressed to the Lords of the Treasury, a copy being also sent to the Postmaster-General, was as follows:—

'Hampstead, 29th February, 1864.

'My Lords,

'Referring to my letter to your lordships of the 12th March last for explanation of the circumstances which rendered my position at the Post Office so difficult, especially in the impaired state of my health, I regret to say that the leave of absence subsequently accorded me having elapsed without any satisfactory result, I have no course left but to resign my appointment as Secretary to the Post Office into your lordships' hands, which I now accordingly beg leave to do. The necessity for this step will at once appear on reference to the enclosed medical certificate.

'I will not, my lords, attempt to conceal the extreme regret with which I have come to the resolution to retire from a pursuit which has been the absorbing occupation of so many years of my life. I had once hoped to assist, for some considerable time to come, in the great work of perfecting our postal system. My disappointment, severe as your lordships will feel it must be, is nevertheless greatly mitigated by the consolation of knowing that all the expectations I ever held out to Parliament and the country have been surpassed by the results. Of these, I beg leave to enclose a brief and necessarily imperfect statement.

'Sincerely thanking your lordships for the ready support you have so frequently afforded me in the performance of my arduous duties,

'I have, &c.,

'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon.

'The Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury, &c.'

Of the brief and imperfect statement of results referred to above, the following is a copy. A few notes, however, are appended for the purpose of giving later results.

'*Results of Postal Reform.*

'Before stating the results of postal reform, it may be convenient that I should briefly enumerate the more important organic improvements effected. They are as follows:

'1. A very large reduction in the rates of postage on all correspondence, whether inland, foreign, or colonial. As

instances in point, it may be stated that letters are now conveyed from any part of the United Kingdom to any other part—even from the Channel Islands to the Shetland Isles—at one-fourth of the charge previously levied on letters passing between post towns only a few miles apart;* and that the rate formerly charged for this slight distance—viz., fourpence—now suffices to carry a letter from any part of the United Kingdom to any part of France, Algeria included.

'2. The adoption of charge by weight, which, by abolishing the charge for mere enclosures, in effect largely extended the reduction of rates.

'3. Arrangements which have led to the almost universal resort to prepayment of correspondence, and that by means of stamps.

'4. The simplification of the mechanism and accounts of the department generally, by the above and other means.

'5. The establishment of the book-post (including in its operation all printed and much MS. matter), at very low rates; and its modified extension to our colonies, and to many foreign countries.

'6. Increased security in the transmission of valuable letters afforded, and temptation to the letter-carriers and others greatly diminished, by reducing the registration fee from 1*s.* to 4*d.*, by making registration of letters containing coin compulsory, and by other means.

'7. A reduction to about one-third in the cost—including postage—of money orders; combined with a great extension and improvement of the system.

'8. More frequent and more rapid communication between the Metropolis and the larger provincial towns; as also between one provincial town and another.

'9. A vast extension of the rural distribution—many thousands of places, and probably some millions of inhabitants, having, for the first time, been included within the postal system.

'10. A great extension of free deliveries. Before the adoption of penny postage, many considerable towns, and

* When my plan was published, the lowest General Post rate was fourpence; but while the plan was under the consideration of Government the rate between post towns not more than eight miles asunder was reduced from fourpence to twopence.

portions of nearly all the larger towns, had either no delivery at all, or deliveries on condition of an extra charge.

'11. Greatly increased facilities afforded for the transmission of foreign and colonial correspondence; by improved treaties with foreign countries, by a better arrangement of the packet service, by sorting on board, and other means.

'12. A more prompt despatch of letters when posted, and a more prompt delivery on arrival.

'13. The division of London and its suburbs into ten postal districts—by which, and other measures, communication within the twelve-miles circle has been greatly facilitated, and the most important delivery of the day has, generally speaking, been accelerated as much as two hours.

'14. Concurrently with these improvements, the condition of the employés has been materially improved; their labours, especially on the Sunday, having been very generally reduced, their salaries increased, their chances of promotion augmented, and other important advantages afforded them.

'*Results.*

'My pamphlet on "Post Office Reform" was written in the year 1836. During the preceding twenty years—viz., from 1815 to 1835, inclusive—*there was no increase whatever in the Post Office revenue, whether gross or net;* and therefore, in all probability, none in the number of letters: and though there was a slight increase in the revenue, and doubtless in the number of letters, between 1835 and the establishment of penny postage early in 1840—an increase chiefly due, in my opinion, to the adoption of part of my plan, viz., the establishment of day mails to and from London—yet, during the whole period of twenty-four years immediately preceding the adoption of penny postage, the revenue, whether gross or net, and the number of letters, were, in effect, stationary.

'Contrast with this the rate of increase under the new system, which has been in operation during a period of about equal length. In the first year of penny postage, the letters more than doubled; and though since then the increase has, of course, been less rapid, yet it has been so steady that, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of trade, every year, without exception, has shown a considerable advance on the preceding year, and the first year's number is now nearly quadrupled.

As regards revenue, there was, of course, at first a large falling off—about a million in gross and still more in net revenue. Since then, however, the revenue, whether gross or net, has rapidly advanced, till now it even exceeds its former amount; the rate of increase, both of letters and revenue, still remaining undiminished.

'In short, a comparison of the year 1863 with 1838 (the last complete year under the old system) shows that the number of chargeable letters has risen from 76 millions to 642 millions (See Note A); and that the revenue, at first so much impaired, has not only recovered its original amount, but risen, the gross from 2,346,000*l.* to about 3,870,000*l.*, and the net from 1,660,000*l.* to about 1,790,000*l.** (See Note B).

'The expectations I held out before the change were, that eventually, under the operation of my plans, the number of letters would increase five-fold, the gross revenue would be the same as before, while the net revenue would sustain a loss of about 300,000*l.* The preceding statement shows that the letters have increased, not five-fold, but nearly eight and a half-fold; that the gross revenue, instead of remaining the same, has increased by about 1,500,000*l.*; while the net revenue, instead of falling 300,000*l.*, has risen more than 100,000*l.* (See Note C).

'While the revenue of the Post Office has thus more than recovered its former amount, the indirect benefit to the general revenue of the country arising from the greatly increased facilities afforded to commercial transactions, though incapable of exact estimate, must be very large. Perhaps it is not too much to assume that, all things considered, the vast benefit of cheap, rapid, and extended postal

* In this comparison of revenue, the mode of calculation in use before the adoption of penny postage has of course been retained—that is to say, the cost of the packets on the one hand, and the produce of the impressed newspaper stamps on the other, have been excluded. The amounts for 1863, are, to some extent, estimated, the accounts not having as yet been fully made up.

A In 1868 the number had increased to 808,000,000 ('Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster General,' p. 4).

B Return 1868, No. 215, the latest account rendered in this form shows that in 1867 the gross revenue had advanced to 4,548,000*l.*, and the net revenue to 2,127,000*l.*

C In 1868 the letters had increased more than ten and a half-fold. In 1867 the gross revenue had increased by 2,202,000*l.*, and the net revenue by 467,000*l.*

communication has been obtained, even as regards the past, without fiscal loss. For the future there must be a large and ever-increasing gain.

'The indirect benefit referred to above is partly manifested in the development of the money order system; under which, since the year 1839, the annual amount transmitted has risen from 313,000*l.* to 16,494,000*l.*; that is, fifty-two-fold (See Note D).

'An important collateral benefit of the new system is to be found in the cessation of that contraband conveyance which once prevailed so far that habitual breach of the postal law had become a thing of course.

'It may be added that the organization thus so greatly improved and extended for postal purposes stands available for other objects; and passing over minor matters, has already been applied with great advantage to the new system of Savings Banks.

'Lastly, the improvements briefly referred to above, with all their commercial, educational, and social benefits, have now been adopted, in greater or less degree—and that through the mere force of example—by the whole civilized world.

'I cannot conclude this summary without gratefully acknowledging the cordial co-operation and zealous aid afforded me in the discharge of my arduous duties. I must especially refer to many among the superior officers of the department—men whose ability would do credit to any service, and whose zeal could not be greater if their object were private instead of public benefit.

'ROWLAND HILL.

'Hampstead, Feb. 23rd, 1864.'

Resignation.

In consequence of further communication from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I wrote to him as follows:—

'Hampstead, March 4th, 1864.

'MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,

'Mr. Moffatt has communicated to me your expressions of desire that I should, if possible, still continue my connection with the Post Office.

D In 1868 the amount transmitted had risen to 19,079,000*l.*, or more than sixty fold ('Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster General,' p. 4.)

'Though much gratified with this further proof of friendly feeling towards myself, and deeply regretting that your earnest and repeated efforts to remove the obstacles to my continuance at the Post Office should have proved unavailing, I am reluctantly obliged—having regard to the opinions so emphatically expressed by my medical advisers, confirmed as they are by my own conviction—to abide by the decision already announced.

'If, however, the expectation entertained by my medical friends of improved health from rest should be realised, I need scarcely say that I shall be most happy to afford Government any advice or assistance it may be in my power to give; and I may remind you that my first official connection with the Post Office was as adviser to Sir Francis Baring, then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'Meanwhile, permit me to say that my brother, Mr. Frederic Hill, one of the Assistant-Secretaries, and my son, Mr. Pearson Hill, a first-class clerk in the Secretary's Office, both of whom are familiar with my views, have ready access to my advice, and have themselves—the first especially—devised and executed many important postal reforms, will be delighted to carry on the work of improvement so far as they may be permitted so to do. I may add that much of the simplification of the money order system, and of the mechanism of the Post Office generally—together with the whole of the economical and other improvements in the packet service, which will, I expect, effect a saving in the current year of about 100,000*l.*—have been accomplished by Mr. Frederic Hill.

'I remain, &c.,

'ROWLAND HILL.'

A few days later I received the subjoined from the Postmaster-General :—

'General Post Office,
March 7th, 1864.

'DEAR SIR ROWLAND,

'I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, informing me that you have resigned your situation as Secretary to the Post Office.

'It is with great concern I hear the state of your health is such as to prevent you from resuming your duties.

'I enclose a copy of the letter I have sent to the Treasury

on the subject of your resignation, which expresses my opinion of the great value of your services, and I have only again to assure you how sensible I am of the loss which the Department has sustained, and of my sincere regret at the cause of your retirement.'

The enclosure was as follows :—

'4th March, 1864.

'My Lords,

'I have received a communication from Sir R. Hill, together with a medical certificate, from which it appears that he has derived no benefit from his leave of absence; and that the state of his health is such as to render it unsafe for him to resume his duties; and in which I am informed that he has already forwarded his resignation of the office as Secretary of the Post Office.

'Under these circumstances, I have no choice left but to accept his resignation; but I cannot do so without expressing my regret that the country should be deprived of the services of this distinguished public servant.

'For the introduction of penny postage alone—a measure which, in itself, and in all its ramifications, has conferred such vast benefits on all classes of the community, and with which the name of Sir Rowland Hill will ever be identified—he deserves the gratitude of his country—indeed, of the civilized world, which, no doubt, will not be niggardly expressed.

'But it is rather my province as Postmaster-General to state simply the high opinion I entertain of the able manner in which Sir Rowland Hill, so long as his health permitted, performed his duties in this Department, and feeling satisfied that your lordships will concur with me, I have no hesitation in recommending you to grant him at once a retiring allowance equal to his full salary, a step which the Superannuation Act enables you to take.'

My reply, written on the same day, was as follows :—

'Hampstead, 8th March, 1864.

'My dear Lord,

'I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your lordship's letter of yesterday enclosing a copy of the letter you have addressed to the Treasury on the subject of

my resignation; and to request that you will accept my thanks for the manner in which you have been pleased to speak of my services.

'I have the honour to be,

'Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

'ROWLAND HILL.

'The Right Hon.
'LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY, &c.'

By this time most of the London papers had given very gratifying notices of my retirement, the 'Daily News' and 'Telegraph' taking the lead. The 'Times' had, indeed, erroneously attributed the original conception of penny postage to Mr. Wallace, as, with equal error, it has lately done to Murray, a man of enterprise in the seventeenth century; but, upon the whole, its article on the subject was highly satisfactory. Other notices appeared during the remaining months of this year, both in the metropolitan and provincial journals; and, though of course there was much variety as to amount of praise, not a single one, so far as I am aware, dealt in blame.

Amongst these later notices there was one which showed that, notwithstanding my careful silence on the subject, suspicion was abroad as to the cause of my resignation; and, as was very natural, surmise went beyond the truth, taking the remote cause for the proximate, attributing my retirement to opposition in the Department, not to the ill-health which such opposition, combined with other troubles, had produced. This notice appeared in the 'Star,' and, though containing the error which I have mentioned, was very cleverly written. Its most striking feature was a recommendation that I should be made Postmaster-General. Even, however, had this course been practicable, the time was now past.

The day after the appearance of this notice a

passage occurred in the House of Lords, which is thus mentioned in my journal:—

'The following tells its own story. I have only to add, that although I know Lord Truro, who inherits his father's interest in my success, I have had no communication with him, direct or indirect:

'"Times," March 9th.

'*Retirement of Sir Rowland Hill.*

'Lord Truro rose to ask Her Majesty's Postmaster-General whether the rumour of Sir Rowland Hill's resignation was well-founded; and, if so, whether he had any objection to state the circumstances under which that resignation had taken place. The noble lord said he put the question to satisfy the strongly expressed desire of the public to know the truth of the rumour to this effect which had got abroad. He was sure that it would cause general regret to hear of the existence of any cause for the retirement of a man who had conferred such an immeasurable benefit upon the country, and, indeed, upon the whole civilized world. (Hear, hear.)

'Lord Stanley of Alderley said that Sir Rowland had recently resigned his position in the Post Office in consequence of the state of his health. Six months ago he applied for six months' leave of absence, in the hope that he might then be enabled to resume his duties, but at the end of that period—the beginning of this month—he forwarded his resignation, saying that the six months' leave of absence had not restored him, and accompanying it with a medical certificate that it would not be safe for him to resume his duties. Those were the whole circumstances connected with Sir Rowland Hill's resignation, as far as he was acquainted with them. He was sure that he should meet with their lordships' concurrence in expressing the deepest regret at the retirement of this able public servant. (Hear, hear.) The name of Sir R. Hill would be inseparably connected with the establishment of the penny post system—one of the greatest improvements of the present age—which had, perhaps, conferred more benefit on mankind than any other invention. (Hear, hear.) Those who recollected the state of things before the penny post would know that to the poorer

classes correspondence by letter was practically interdicted, that to the class above them the cost of a letter was a very serious matter, and that, in the commercial and mercantile world, intercourse was very much restricted by the expense of correspondence. Since its first introduction, the penny post system had been greatly extended; facilities of all sorts were given; money orders and savings banks had been connected with it, and in every way it had been largely developed. It had become popular all over the civilized world, and with it the name of Hill would be for ever connected. Their lordships would confirm him in expressing the general regret which would be felt by the public at his retirement, and the universal acknowledgment of the value of his services would, no doubt, be a great satisfaction to Sir R. Hill. (Hear, hear.)'

Amongst the numerous manifestations at this time, not the least gratifying was the meeting at Birmingham, at which it was determined to raise subscriptions for the purpose of erecting a statue to me in some public part of that town, a design subsequently carried into effect, the work being executed by Mr. Hollins. My pleasure at this movement was not a little enhanced by the fact that the originator of the project, the late Mr. James Lloyd, had been, some forty years before, my pupil.

A few days after the meeting at Birmingham I received, through my steady and valued friend the late Mr. Matthew Forster, the following communication from the late Mr. Joseph Parkes, whom I had known almost from boyhood, and to whom I could not but feel much indebted for his spontaneous and earnest efforts in my behalf:—

'10th March, 1864. R. C. 5¼ P.M.

'Dear Mr. Forster,

'I could not leave my office till 5. I thought my interview with Sir F. Baring so good a chapter in Hill's life, and so important a testimony to his public services, that I penned the written minute in a note to you before I left

Staple Inn. In fact, Sir Francis is the best, and a willing, witness of Hill's deserts.

'Yours truly,
'JOSEPH PARKES.'

Sir Francis Baring's opinion of Rowland Hill.

'Staple Inn, 10th March, 1864.

'DEAR MR. FORSTER,

'I found Sir Francis Baring at his rooms after breakfast this morning, and I sat an hour with him on the subject of our friend Sir Rowland Hill's deserts and claims on his country. No one could be more kind or sensible in all his views of the subject, and on the proper course for Sir Rowland Hill's friends to pursue in the matter.

'I detailed to him the particulars of my interview with Moffatt yesterday, and who, Sir Francis thinks, has not injudiciously broken ground with Mr. Gladstone; and Sir Francis cheerfully agrees to be one of three, *i.e.*, with Mr. Wilson Patten and Moffatt, in a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'Sir Francis at first doubted whether he himself should be one of the best persons to promote the object of Hill's friends in seeing Mr. Gladstone, as he said he and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had each *angles* that possibly might not quite *square*. However, afterwards, he agreed with me that such were of no moment, and that he felt it was due to himself, equally as to Hill, that he should unite with Mr. W. Patten and Moffatt. He said really emphatically, "No public man can so well or naturally impress Hill's deserts on the Chancellor of the Exchequer as myself, and it is my duty to do it. Hill was long in office under me, *or rather I under him.* For months, I may say, he was little out of my own room. I have the highest estimate of his public services on the postal changes, of his talent and good judgment throughout many difficult considerations and decisions; and his integrity was unimpeachable in carrying out his plans. Further, I always found him open-minded in regard to objections made to his own individual propositions on some points, often material, on which we individually differed, and in which, now and then, I overruled him; he always made due allowance for *my* disagreement with him, and all proper consideration for *my*

difficulties and views as Chancellor of the Exchequer. And I formed not only this high opinion of his character and public service, but I also formed a friendship for him which would induce me always to promote his interest in any matter in my power."

'I really thus pen his almost exact words as due to Hill, and because they much impressed me. And you know Sir Francis is not a man of many words, or in manner of overflowing heart.* * * He considers that at Hill's age, and considering the immense benefits his country has derived at his hands, a retiring pension on full salary only would be a "mockery" (Sir Francis's own expression); and he considers that either his bare official pension, or, say 1000*l.* per annum, might be asked of Gladstone, with a grant of a proper sum as a public reward or just gift to him. We talked awhile on the *amount* of that sum.

* * * * * * *

'But we both thought the figure an after consideration. He said the pressure of the proposed deputation to Gladstone must be placed on Mr. Gladstone, as all Chancellors of the Exchequer naturally were given to be scared when such exceptional claims were made on the public's purse. But he spoke highly of Gladstone's generosity of mind as a public and private man; and he said he was certain the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be sincerely glad to give full consideration to Hill's most peculiar case and public claims, and to do all in his power officially, and within his public duty. Sir Francis mentioned the "Times" article among others as particularly useful, and as having placed Hill's services on the proper and full basis. He did not know of the Birmingham statue meeting, and was much struck by the fact. I send you my Birmingham "Daily Post" with the report, and the deputation should be armed with it to show Mr. Gladstone.

'Sir Francis thought no two better men than Mr. W. Patten and Moffatt could be selected as his colleagues; Moffatt also having been an original strong promoter of Hill's postal reforms and early movement.

* * * * * * *

'It is no question of what Hill's pecuniary private position may, or may not be. It is simply the appreciation of his singular services to his country, and the gains of his countrymen by his mind and labours—of the unquestionable success of *his* plans of postal reform—of the vast beneficial *results.*

'I will only add that I cannot sufficiently appreciate Sir Francis Baring's kind and earnest interest in your good object.

'Truly yours,
'JOSEPH PARKES.

'P.S. I will only repeat that Sir Francis was decided that Mr. Gladstone should be seen at once, and before the Treasury decide on Hill's retiring pension, and that Gladstone, by such a deputation, must be backed up to a full act of justice. Sir Francis said he was confident Lord Palmerston would agree to any course Gladstone approves.

'The proper decision would be to give Hill the full salary as retiring pension, and the sum of money. But we shall see how matters work as they progress.'

'EXTRACT from the "Daily News" of March 12th.

'*House of Commons.*

'Pension to Lady Hill. Notice by Lord Palmerston.

'*Sir Rowland Hill.*

'*Lord Palmerston.*—Sir, I believe it is well known that that valuable and deserving public servant, Sir Rowland Hill, is about to retire from the public service, and that in the ordinary course of things he will be entitled to a pension for life. I beg to move that this House resolve itself into a committee of supply, on Monday next, for the purpose of considering whether that pension should not be extended for the life of Lady Hill should she survive her husband.'

On the 15th I received a minute of the Treasury, of which the following is a copy. There are some errors in the minute, of which the most important was noticed in my letter to Mr. Gladstone of this day (also subjoined), but nothing could be more gratifying than the minute as a whole :—

'TREASURY MINUTE, dated 11th March, 1864.

'Read letter from Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B., dated the 29th February, stating that six months' absence having

elapsed without any satisfactory results as regards the state of his health, he has now no course left but to resign his appointment as Secretary to the Post Office.

'Read also letter from the Postmaster-General of the fourth instant, stating that Sir Rowland Hill has in consequence of the state of his health been compelled to retire from the public service, and bearing his testimony to the eminent services which Sir Rowland Hill has rendered.

'The retirement of Sir Rowland Hill from the office of Secretary to the Post Office would, if treated under the ordinary machinery of the Superannuation Act, afford to my Lords the power of granting him no more than a pension of 566*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, or at the utmost 666*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, but it supplies, in the judgment of my Lords, an occasion of peculiar fitness for calling into action the 9th or special clause of the Superannuation Act, and thus, by a proceeding which marks their sense of his services, of drawing to those services the attention of Parliament.

'The period during which Sir Rowland Hill has held office, either by a temporary or a permanent appointment, is but little in excess of twenty years; yet my Lords have to regret that while he remains full as ever of ability, energy, and resources, and of disposition to expend them for the public good, the state of his health, due, without doubt, in great part to his indefatigable labours, compels him to solicit a retirement.

'It is not, however, by length of service that the merits and claims of such a man are to be measured. It is not even by any acknowledgment or reward which the Executive Government, in the exercise of the powers confided to it, can confer.

'The postal system, one of the most powerful organs which modern civilisation has placed at the command of Government, has, mainly under the auspices and by the agency of Sir Rowland Hill, been, within the last quarter of a century, not merely improved but transformed. The letters transmitted have increased nearly nine-fold, and have been carried at what may be estimated as little more than one-ninth of the former charge. In numerous respects convenience has been consulted and provided for even more than cheapness.

'Upon the machinery for the transmission of letters there have been grafted other schemes, which, at a former period, would justly have been deemed visionary, for the transmis-

sion of books with other printed matter, and of money, and for receiving and storing the savings of the people.

'While these arduous duties have been undertaken, the condition of the persons employed in this vast department has been improved, and, could attention be adequately drawn to what lies beneath the surface, my Lords are persuaded that the methods of communication by letter which are now in action have produced for the mass of the population social and moral benefits which might well have thrown even these brilliant results into the shade.

'As respects purely fiscal interests, advantages so great as those which have been recited were, of course, not to be obtained without some effort or sacrifice. But the receipts on account of postal service, which on the first adoption of the change were reduced by above a million sterling, have now more than recovered themselves; and if computed on the same basis as under the old system, the gross sum realised is about 3,870,000*l.* instead of 2,346,000*l.*, and the net about 1,790,000*l.* in lieu of 1,660,000*l.*; at the same time contraband in letters may be stated to have ceased, and instead of a stationary revenue, such as that derived from letters between 1815 and 1855, the State has one which is steadily and even rapidly progressive.

'My Lords do not forget that it has been by the powerful agency of the railway system that these results have been rendered practicable. Neither do they enter into the question, as foreign to the occasion, what honour may be due to those who, before the development of the plans of Sir Rowland Hill, urged the adoption of the uniform penny postage.* Nor are they insensible to the fact that the co-operation of many able public servants has been essential to the work performed. But after all justice has been done to others, Sir Rowland Hill is beyond doubt the person to whom it was given to surmount every kind of obstacle, and to bring what had been theretofore matter of speculation into the world of practice, without whom the country would not have enjoyed the boon, or would only have enjoyed it at a later date, and to whom, accordingly, its enjoyment may justly be deemed due.

'Nor is it in this country alone that are to be perceived the happy fruits of his labours; the recognition of his plans has spread with a rapidity to be accounted for only by their

* See in correction of this mistake, pp. 401 and 512.

excellence from land to land, and truly may now be said to have met with acceptance throughout the civilised world.

'Under these circumstances, it may justly be averred that my Lords are dealing on the present occasion with the case not merely of a meritorious public servant, but of a benefactor of his race; and that his fitting reward is to be found not in this or that amount of pension, but in the grateful recollection of his country.

'But my Lords discharge the portion of duty which belongs to them with cordial satisfaction, in awarding to Sir Rowland Hill, for life, his full salary of 2,000*l.* per annum.

'Let a copy of this Minute be laid before Parliament.

'Transmit copy to the Postmaster-General, with a request that it may be communicated to Sir Rowland Hill.'

The following is my letter to Mr. Gladstone :—

'(Private and immediate.)

'Hampstead, March 15th, 1864.

'My dear Mr. Gladstone,

'I have just received through the Postmaster-General a copy of the Treasury minute of the 11th inst.

'I need not say how much I feel indebted for the very handsome terms in which my services are acknowledged, and for the liberal retiring allowance which the Treasury has granted me.

'There is, however, one part of the minute which I trust their lordships may be induced to reconsider. It is that in which the original conception of the *uniform* penny rate is attributed to others than myself. As this forms the main feature of my plan, and as its discovery and first proposal were wholly my own, you will, I am sure, pardon me if I press that in a formal document like the one in question a mistake on so important a point may be corrected.

'But perhaps I ought to address an official letter to the Treasury, stating more formally and fully the facts of the case. Will you favour me with your wishes in this respect? My immediate object is to request that the copy of the minute to be laid before Parliament may not be issued until the point in question shall have been investigated.

'I remain, &c., in haste,

'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon.
'The Chancellor of the Exchequer, &c.'

Upon receiving Mr. Gladstone's reply I wrote to the Treasury a letter in which, while making due acknowledgement and repeating my offer of future service, I requested attention to the point in question. I also enclosed a memorandum recapitulating the facts of the case. Both documents will be found in the Appendix, O.

My object in marking as "Immediate" the letter containing the above memorandum was that it might be laid before Parliament as soon as possible after the publication of the unfortunate error which it was intended to correct; and more particularly that this might be done before the Easter holidays, then close at hand. This point Mr. Gladstone was kind enough to secure; and in a few days my letter, with the memorandum, appeared in the public papers. Moreover, he assured me, in a private letter, that it was not intended in the Treasury minute to put a negation on my claim to originality.

Lord Palmerston's notice relative to a pension to my wife produced a good deal of discussion amongst my friends; and owing to the earnest advice of several, among whom the late Mr. Matthew Forster, his son, Mr. John Forster, and the late Mr. Joseph Parkes were most active, an address from Lady Hill to the Queen was prepared, and a communication made to Lord Palmerston on the subject. A meeting was then held, at which, in addition to the above, Sir Francis Baring, Mr. Moffatt, and several others were present, and arrangements were made for postponing further proceedings in Parliament till after Easter. With these and the after proceedings connected with the Parliamentary grant, except as to my unavoidable correspondence with Mr. Moffatt, I took no part whatever, but left the matter entirely in the hands of my friends.

The purport of Lady Hill's address to the Queen

was to pray that any reward to which Her Majesty might consider me entitled should take a form which should be beneficial to our children.

A deputation, with Sir Francis Baring at its head, waited upon Lord Palmerston, and in consequence of the representations then made to him, the motion of which he had given notice was postponed, and, when actually brought forward, greatly modified.

Lord Palmerston's motion was finally made on June 11th, the following message from the Queen having been brought up by his lordship on the 6th :—

'VICTORIA REGINA.—Her Majesty, taking into consideration the eminent services of Sir Rowland Hill, the late Secretary of the Post Office, in devising and carrying out various important improvements in the postal administration, and being desirous, in recognition of such services, to confer some signal mark of her favour upon him, recommends to the House to concur in enabling Her Majesty to grant Sir Rowland Hill the sum of 20,000*l.*'

The following report of the proceedings is taken from the 'Times,' abridgment, however, being made, as shown by the omission of inverted commas, in one or two places :—

'Mr. Massey having read Her Majesty's message, recommending the grant of a sum of 20,000*l.* to Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B., in recognition of his services in connection with postal reforms,

'Lord Palmerston rose and said : I trust that the Committee will be disposed to concur without any objection in the recommendation which Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to make. (Cheers.) Sir Rowland Hill is a man of great genius, of great sagacity, of great perseverance and industry, and he has rendered great services both to this and other countries. He formed the opinion that the Post Office was more properly a department for the performance of service than for the mere collection of revenue, and with a boldness which staggered a great number of persons who had not looked at

the matter from the same point of view, he recommended a very large reduction in the rate of postage, with the confidence that it would in the end bring up the revenue to the same amount to which it had previously stood, and would in the mean time confer the greatest possible benefit upon the community. (Hear, hear.) Many people thought that he was too sanguine in his calculations, and that, although the number of letters might increase, the revenue would not recover the great shock which the introduction of the penny postage would inflict upon it. Those anticipations have been falsified, and the calculations of Sir R. Hill have turned out to be correct. Sir R. Hill had for nearly a quarter of a century performed, with some slight interval, the arduous duties which have devolved upon him in connection with the scheme, and he is now at a time of life when his health must have suffered from the great labour which attaches to his office. The Treasury have on that ground given him permission to retire, and have done that which I am sure this House will not think too much—they have given him his full salary for life. He is now, I believe, in the seventieth year of his age, and his health has been shattered by the labours which he has had to perform. Under these circumstances, Her Majesty thought that this House would be of opinion that the great services which he has performed would recommend him for a grant which should enable him to make those arrangements for his family which the short period during which he may probably enjoy his pension would not otherwise permit him to make. His labours have produced more beneficial results than may strike persons at first sight. It is quite clear that the facilities which the penny postage has given to the transactions of commerce, and to all communications connected with business, must have been infinitely advantageous to the industry, and, by that means, to the general revenue of the country. (Hear, hear.) In that view Sir Rowland Hill has performed great services to the country; but there is another view in which he has produced still more startling results, namely, in the amount of happiness and comfort which his invention—if I may call it an invention—his plan, has conferred upon millions of the poorer classes of the community. (Hear.) When the rate of postage was as high as it was before that plan was introduced, communication between the members of a poor family who were scattered about the

country was impossible. How could a poor labouring man pay a shilling or sixpence for a letter? Communication between the members of such families was more difficult than the communication between England and Australia is now. (Hear, hear.) The cultivation of the affections raises men in their own estimation and in the standing which they occupy in society. It improves their morals, and develops all those qualities which tend to make useful members of the community. Therefore I say that Sir R. Hill, independently of the benefits which his plan has conferred upon the general interests and prosperity of the country, has the merit of having conferred a great benefit upon the labouring and poorer classes of the people, which would of itself entitle him to any mark of approbation and reward which the House may be disposed to confer upon him. In the year 1838, before the penny postage was introduced, the number of letters transmitted through the Post Office was 76,000,000; in 1863 the number was 642,000,000. (Hear, hear.) That is a measure of the extent to which that plan has assisted the industry and contributed to the comfort and happiness of the community. There are many matters connected with the plan which are independent of the mere reduction of the amount paid for the postage of letters. Among others, there is the facility which his arrangements have given for the transmission of money in small sums from one part of the country to another. The amount of the money orders taken out in 1838 was 313,000*l.*; in 1863 it was 16,494,000*l.* (Hear, hear.) What an immense advantage must have resulted from the facility for the safe transmission of so large an amount of small sums, which it would otherwise have been very difficult and expensive to transmit. Then there is the book-post. It is greatly conducive to the interests of literature, and the arrangements have been most extensively taken advantage of. The gross revenue of the Post Office has increased very considerably, but of course the increase of facilities has led to the multiplication of establishments and officers, and has therefore largely increased the outgoings. In 1838 the gross receipts were 2,436,000*l.*; in 1863 they were 3,870,000*l.*; showing that Sir R. Hill was perfectly right in anticipating that at no distant period the receipts of the Post Office would recover from the diminution which the first introduction of his plan naturally produced. In point of

fact, everybody is so well acquainted with the merits of Sir R. Hill's plan and the good effects which it has produced, that I shall content myself with moving the resolution of which I have given notice. (Cheers.) The noble Viscount concluded by moving that a sum not exceeding 20,000*l.* should be granted to Her Majesty as a provision for Sir Rowland Hill.'

'Mr. Williams said that no one more highly estimated the great services of Sir R. Hill than he did, but it ought to be remembered that he was not the only person who was concerned in carrying out the change in the postal system. The late Mr. Wallace, almost night after night, urged the subject upon the attention of that House, and did more to introduce the plan to the country than Sir R. Hill. Years ago there had been a large subscription raised for Sir Rowland Hill, and he thought that and the pension were a sufficient recompense for his services, especially as the Post Office had yielded a very large revenue, whereas at present he did not think it paid its expenses. (Cries of "It does.")'

Mr. J. Ewart, on behalf of Liverpool, Mr. Turner, on behalf of Manchester, Mr. Baines for Leeds, and Mr. Crawford for London, respectively declared that the measure had the concurrence and support of their constituencies. Hearty approbation was also expressed by Mr. (now Vice-Chancellor) Malins.

'Sir F. Baring, having been Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time when Sir R. Hill's plan was introduced (hear, hear), wished to bear testimony to the ability of that eminent public servant, and to the good sense, intelligence, and good humour with which he met and surmounted the innumerable difficulties that it was then thought right to throw in his way.'

Mr. Neate, who had been at the time Sir Francis Baring's private secretary, most justly dwelt on the support given to me by Sir Francis, when my official superior.

Mr. Hennessy asked why Sir Rowland Hill had not been created Postmaster-General; to which Lord

Palmerston remarked that had he been appointed to that post he would have had to go out on a change of Government.

The motion was carried without a division.

On the next day but one, I addressed the following letter to Lord Palmerston :—

'Hampstead, 13th June, 1864.

'My Lord,

'I respectfully request your lordship to convey to Her Majesty the expression of my humble duty and deep gratitude for the gracious favour and high honour Her Majesty has been pleased to bestow upon me by her late message to Parliament on my behalf.

'I need not say that I carry into my retirement that feeling of profound respect and loyal attachment with which Her Majesty inspires all her subjects, or that I shall retain to the last day of my life a deep sense of Her Majesty's gracious condescension.

'I beg also to add my grateful acknowledgments to your lordship for your favourable consideration of my services, and for the very handsome and gratifying manner in which you were pleased to speak of them in the debate on Her Majesty's gracious message.

'I have the honour to be,
'My Lord,
'Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servant,
'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon.
'Viscount Palmerston, G.C.B., K.G.'

A few days afterwards Lord Granville brought the question before the House of Lords in a very kind and graceful speech; in which, after referring to the Report of the Parliamentary Committee on whose recommendation penny postage was adopted, after touching on the antecedent state of postal affairs, after referring to those who had assisted in the work of reform, particularly to the London Mercantile Committee, and after assigning credit to Lord Clanricarde for my appointment to the Post

Office, he proceeded to speak of the extent to which cheap postage had been adopted by the civilized world, and of its results in the multiplication of letters and the increase of revenue; he concluded with cordially recommending the grant to their lordships' approval.

'Lord Brougham said there was this peculiarity in Sir Rowland Hill—that whereas inventors in general were the most sanguine of men, who saw no difficulties in the way, and who exaggerated the probable results of their novelty, he understated the value of his invention and over-estimated the difficulties and the expense of adopting it. (Hear.) He calculated that there would be a loss of 300,000*l.*, instead of which the gross increase of revenue had been 1,700,000*l.*; and after deducting 500,000*l.* for the packet service and all other expenses, there was a clear net increase of 100,000*l.*

* * * * * *

'The Marquis of Clanricarde had the satisfaction of remembering that under him, and through him, in some degree, Sir Rowland Hill had entered the Post Office; and bore testimony to the extraordinary zeal for the public service, the judgment, the discretion, the temper, and unvarying urbanity with which he met all the difficulties that he had to encounter. Of course those who had been accustomed to the old system viewed the innovation proposed with great alarm and suspicion. He attributed no blame to these officers, believing that the opinions given by them against the new system were founded upon very natural fears and bias. But penny postage, as his noble friend had said, was not the only improvement for which the nation had to thank Sir Rowland Hill. His belief was that, if it had not been for Sir Rowland Hill, the business in the Money Order Office would not have reached to one-sixteenth of its present proportions, and he doubted, indeed, whether that business would have been carried on any longer. No balance had been struck, and no one could tell what assets were in hand. He then asked Mr. Hill, who at that time had introduced some important improvements in the circulation of letters, to take this subject in hand. The result of that gentleman's efforts was to establish, if not an exact balance, at least what practically amounted to it; the system was materially altered, and

instead of eleven entries for every money order, the number was reduced to four or five; and since that time he had heard of no defalcation or fraud on the part of postmasters, such as had frequently occurred before that time. During the time that he had the honour to be connected with the Post Office, he always found that Mr. Hill laboured zealously and efficiently, and always to his satisfaction. When objections to his plans were raised, Mr. Hill always received them in a fair and temperate manner, and never complained of being overruled when fair grounds for so doing had been shown. Upon the whole, this country had never rewarded by a grant of money any public servant who more richly deserved it. Mr. Hill's name would live in every country, for every country had derived benefit from his labours.'

The motion was then agreed to,* and, I may add, without a division.

I need not say that the parliamentary recognition of my services, so handsomely made, was and is regarded by myself and my family as the crowning honour of my life.

I addressed letters of thanks to Lord Granville, Lord Brougham, and the Marquis of Clanricarde, and wrote as follows to Mr. Gladstone :—

'Hampstead, 15th June, 1864.

'My dear Mr. Gladstone,

'While I have written to Lord Palmerston and Lord Granville to thank them for the favour they have publicly shown me, I cannot but feel that my chief acknowledgments for the very handsome and gratifying manner in which my services have been recognised must be due to yourself, who, from first to last, have lent me your powerful aid in my efforts to perform the duties committed to me, and have given to all my suggestions and representations a kind, candid, and careful consideration.

'Believe me, &c.,

'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon.
'The Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c., &c., &c.'

* The above report is taken, with abridgments, from the 'Times' of June 15th, 1864.

To the above letter Mr. Gladstone replied as follows :—

'11, Carlton House Terrace,
'June 15th, 1864.

'My dear Sir R. Hill,

'The support you have had from me has been the very best that I could give; but had it been much better and more effective, it would not have been equal to your deserts and claims.

'I sincerely hope you are deriving much benefit from a lightened mind,

'And remain,
'Always sincerely yours,
'W. E. Gladstone.'

Amidst the above transactions some events occurred of no small interest to myself; the first being that I had the gratification of receiving at Oxford the honorary degree of D.C.L.; and the second, an address voted at a town's meeting at Liverpool, followed by a valuable presentation of pictures—the productions, the choice being kindly left to me, of my friends Creswick, Cook, and the late Mr. Stanfield. I will also mention here, though it occurred a year later, the presentation from the town of Longton of two fine china vases, specimens of its manufacture, accompanied with an appropriate address.

About a week after the date of Mr. Gladstone's letter I had the honour of receiving the Albert Gold Medal of the Society of Arts. The meeting, which was large and enthusiastic, was presided over by the Prince of Wales; and the following, taken from the 'Standard' of June 25th,* is a brief account of the proceedings :—

'Mr. W. Hawes, in introducing Sir Rowland Hill to the Prince, to whom had been awarded the Albert Gold Medal for eminent service to all classes of the community, in

* A more complete account of the ceremony is given in the 'Journal of the Society of Arts,' No. 606, vol. xii.

creating the penny postage system, and inaugurating other postal reforms, remarked that those reforms had benefited all sections of the community, and had been advantageous to science, art, literature, manufactures, and commerce. He paid a very high tribute to the valuable services rendered by Sir R. Hill to the country, and they wished to mark their sense of those services by presenting Sir Rowland Hill with the first Albert medal.

'His Royal Highness then presented the medal to Sir R. Hill, who, on coming forward to receive it, was most enthusiastically cheered.

'His Royal Highness said: I have very, very great pleasure in presenting you with this medal. Great as that pleasure would be under ordinary circumstances, it is rendered infinitely more so by having to present it to so distinguished a person, and one who has rendered such great and signal services to his country. (Loud cheers.)

'Sir Rowland Hill, on receiving the medal, begged to be allowed to express his thanks for the great honour which had been conferred on him. The value of the distinction was increased by the consideration that the medal awarded him was founded by the Society to commemorate the memory of the late Prince Consort; and if anything could add to its value it would be the kind and gracious manner in which it had been presented to him by His Royal Highness. (Cheers.)'

Some time afterwards I received a letter from the Treasury stating that their lordships had "cordial satisfaction in giving directions to the Paymaster-General to issue to me the amount of the Parliamentary grant, 20,000*l.*"

Such was the final close of my official career; and, without forgetting the struggles, delays, disappointments, or mortifications attending it, I cannot but acknowledge that when I compare my experience with that of other reformers or inventors, I ought to regard myself as supremely fortunate. Amongst those who have laboured to effect great improvements, how many have felt their success limited to the fact that by their efforts seed was sown which in

another age would germinate and bear fruit! how many have by their innovations exposed themselves to obloquy, ridicule, perhaps even to the scorn and abhorrence of at least their own generation; and, alas! how few have lived to see their predictions more than verified, their success amply acknowledged, and their deeds formally and gracefully rewarded!

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

Here, then, closes my narrative of postal reforms It must not be supposed, however, that no work will remain for a future historian; for not only is the course of postal improvement, like that of any other great department of human affairs, absolutely without limit, but various important changes may be regarded as distinctly in prospect, however uncertain may be the time of their accomplishment. As much has been achieved of which in the outset I had but a dim conception, and much also of which I had never thought at all, every advancement opening a field for yet further progress, and every difficulty surmounted affording encouragement to further effort and facilities for further achievement; so the point now attained enables us to look onward to points yet to be reached, and to conceive of others as still beyond our sight.

Thus, it yet remains to carry into full effect the principles for regulating the packet service recommended in Lord Canning's Report already referred to; principles in accordance with those of economy and free trade; a task unfortunately rendered at once more difficult and far longer than it should have been by the retrogressive measures lately mentioned. To accomplish this, it is necessary that every branch of the packet service should be rendered at least self-supporting, except, indeed, in any special case, if any

such there be, where other national interests, yet greater than those of the Post Office, require an expenditure beyond receipts; and even there I would submit that such additional expenditure should be charged not to the Post Office, but to that department of state to which it really pertains; clear accounts being obviously important to economy, and all attempt to hide political action under the mask of postal facility being, to say the least, absolutely futile.

Of course, the rule of self-support should in like manner be maintained in every other department of postal service. And this, I may remark, would furnish the means for a just increase of advantages in those districts or departments in which receipts may be found to be much in excess of expenditure; an arrangement which would perhaps include the establishment of tubular conveyance* to a limited extent in certain directions, and would certainly give to many of our great manufacturing and commercial towns either an increase in the number of deliveries, or of mails.

In order that economic improvement may not be unduly encumbered with fixed arrangements, it would be well to limit the duration of all future contracts to some moderate period, say three years; but, under this restriction, it is very desirable for the sake of economy, and for other important considerations, that the contract system should be greatly, though gradually, extended. Experience may show that it may safely and advantageously be made to include the whole postal work at the provincial offices, and various separate departments in the offices within the metropolitan districts, not wholly excluding the Chief Office itself. I may add that the benefit of this change would be greatly increased if the proposed contractors, adopting views now gradu-

* See p. 347.

ally gaining ground, should arrange to give their respective subordinates a direct interest in the energetic and economical performance of the service.

Independently of the moral benefits consequent upon the abolition of private patronage, I believe the direct financial advantage which might be expected from the faithful adoption and rigorous execution of this principle would be, as I have already said, an eventual saving of probably not less than 250,000*l.* a year.

Judging by what has been done at the various telegraphic offices and elsewhere, and bearing in mind the change now steadily progressing in public opinion, I should hope that one beneficial effect of an extension of the contract system would be that female labour would be admitted to a much larger share in postal employment; an improvement which my brother and I always had much at heart.*

Of a Parcels Post I have already spoken; and I am confident that, whenever established, provided of course that it be on good arrangements, its benefit will be great.

I have already indicated the desirableness of lowering the rate of inland letter postage from a penny per half-ounce to a penny per ounce—a change which would obviously give much relief as regards heavy letters.

My brother Frederic twice formally proposed, once under Lord Stanley of Alderley, and once under the Duke of Montrose, that negotiations should be entered into with a view to establishing throughout Europe an international postage on a low uniform rate, submitting, to that end, a complete plan; I need not enlarge upon the political, moral, and commercial advantages of so comprehensive an improvement.

* I have lately learnt (1870) with much pleasure, that this improvement has been adopted in the new department of Telegraphy.

Concurrent negotiations should be entered into for extending our outer money order system to many foreign countries not yet brought within its range.

It has been repeatedly urged in Parliament and in the public press that the office of Postmaster-General should cease to be political and become permanent; and, as already intimated, I cannot but consider such change highly desirable; seeing that a permanent head of the Department would have ample time and motive to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the business of the office, and would naturally be led to select his subordinates with more direct reference to their probable efficiency; his duration in office making it probable that the fruits of his own selection, whether good or bad, would be reaped by himself.

Supposing the above change to be made, it would become even more desirable than it is at present that the Postmaster-General should have the disposal of that very numerous class of Post Office appointments still retained by the Treasury; seeing that, in addition to his being in more direct communication with those on whose advice it is important that he should act, he would also, as a matter of course, have better information on the whole subject than the Treasury can command. Such transference would also manifestly tend to that concentration of responsibility which all who have rightly studied the principles of administration agree with Jeremy Bentham in regarding as of primary importance.

These organic changes being made, there would be good ground to hope that, in due time, the all-important rule of promotion by simple and exclusive reference to demonstrated fitness would be strictly followed.

One more change may be spoken of, but on this point I rather suggest inquiry than advise action.

The abandonment of the Post Office monopoly has much to recommend it, but yet is not a one-sided question. On the one hand, it implies the removal of an offence from our statute book, and the probable rise of a wholesome competition wherever the service is performed with less than the greatest efficiency and cheapness; a competition which, more perhaps than any other external circumstance, would tend to compel the Department to have due regard to simple merit in its officers, and economic efficiency in all its arrangements. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the operations of the Post Office, extending over the whole country, provide for the correspondence of many districts where the population is too small or too sparse to yield any profit whatever; and that although its general rule is not to go further than this, by providing for districts which cannot be served without loss, yet for purposes of Government the rule is in many instances set aside; it must be added that there are many reasons in favour of affording a service, not indeed day by day, but at least week by week, to every house in the United Kingdom (a completeness already attained in France, Prussia, and Switzerland); and it would seem hard that the Post Office, while called upon to continue all this ill-remunerated or non-remunerated service, should be exposed to competition in that more profitable part of its business which alone rival establishments would undertake.

Upon the whole, however, I am so impressed with the evils attaching to every monopoly, that I cannot but regard the abandonment in question, after due preparation, as a desirable step.

Before taking leave of my readers, I would express an earnest hope that my narrative, besides describing the progress of a remarkable change, may prove especially useful to all who may at any time con-

template a devotion of their powers to the cause of departmental reform; that it may be serviceable alike for encouragement and for warning—for encouragement, as showing that the field is open, and success, with its rewards, not unattainable; for warning, as showing with what difficulties it is beset, how serious the obstacles, how long the delays, how galling the mortifications, and how deep the disappointments, to be encountered even by one who is happy enough to attain at length the goal towards which his long, laborious, and anxious race has been directed.

APPENDIX A. (p. 66.)

Letter to Postmaster-General Lord Clanricarde.

Hampstead, 3rd January, 1849.

My dear Lord,

Referring to the various representations which I have at different times taken the liberty of making to your Lordship, relative to my position, and to the difficulties arising out of it which still impede the course of improvement in the Post Office, I find myself called upon by present circumstances to request your kind attention to a review of the whole subject.

Your Lordship will remember that my present duties were undertaken with great reluctance, because of the doubt I felt whether in the position I was to occupy I should be able to secure those great objects whose attainment would naturally be expected of me, as well by the Government as the public, and that one of the most weighty of the considerations influencing me to accept the appointment, was the prospect which was held out of such reorganization in the official arrangements of the Department, as would at no distant time place in my hands such prompt and direct means of acquiring information and exercising control as I have always deemed necessary for the full realization of my plans.

These views, your Lordship will recollect, are fully set forth in my letter to Mr. Hawes, of 23rd November, 1846.

I feel sure that your Lordship will bear witness to my having used, to the best of my ability, all such authority as was placed in my hands, and to my having made every possible effort to surmount or avoid the obstacles incident to my present position.

It was with this view that I selected and submitted to your

Lordship those improvements which, from their comparative simplicity, or from the concurrence of the practical officers in my views, were most readily carried into effect, deferring others, either in whole or in part, where the measures, however important and even urgent in themselves, presented great complexity or appeared to be, on whatever grounds, very repugnant to those who had to carry them into effect.

Among the improvements thus effected are the following:—

1st. The time for posting letters at the London receiving houses extended.

2nd. The limitation of weight abolished.

3rd. An additional daily despatch to London from the principal villages in the vicinity established without additional expense.

4th. As one step among others towards the extinction of money prepayment, the business of all new receiving-houses restricted to stamped and unpaid letters. A lower scale of salaries being also consequently introduced.

5th. The postal arrangements of 120 of the largest towns in the United Kingdom revised and completed.

6th. Unlimited writing on inland newspapers authorised on payment of 1*d.* fee.

7th. The public and the Department better protected from annoyance and loss in respect of unpaid letters, by the establishment of a summary process for recovering postage from the senders.

8th. The book-post established.

9th. The advantage of cheap registration secured to the public (by reducing the charge from 1*s.* to 6*d.*,) without inconvenience to the Department.

10th. An important extension of the time of posting late letters for a great part of the United Kingdom afforded by arrangements at the Euston Railway Station.

11th. As a step towards more frequent communication between large towns, a third mail per day established from Birmingham and other towns on the North Western Railway to London; this addition being made by the North Western Company without payment.

12th. Day mails extended to several smaller towns in a circuit of about twenty miles round London.

13th. The number of mail-guards reduced by placing the smaller mails under the charge of the railway guards.

14th. The service of parliamentary returns for private bills provided for.

15th. The despatch of mails at the country offices facilitated, and the late letter fees secured to the revenue by requiring both fee and postage to be paid in stamps. This improvement is about to take effect.

Some of the improvements in the money-order department also belong to this class.

Upwards of twelve months ago, this class of improvements being, as I thought, nearly exhausted, I was preparing to address your Lordship as at present, when my design was postponed through the following circumstance:—The money-order department being of such a nature as to admit of separation, in a great degree, from the other business of the office, and Colonel Maberly having declined to undertake the responsibility thereof under the retrenchments and other improvements adopted on my recommendation by your Lordship and the Treasury, you were pleased to transfer the secretarial management of that department to me.

Of the change which has followed this transfer I need not speak in detail. By a report of Mr. Barth, the head of the department, dated 31st January, 1848, it appears that the accounts were then in an almost hopeless state of arrears; great doubt was entertained whether they ever could be made complete, and the expense of their completion, supposing it to be possible, was estimated at 10,000*l.* No general balance had ever been struck since the institution of the department in 1839, and the liabilities were of unknown amount. To avoid the enormous expense of bringing up the arrears, and to ensure the extinction of unknown liabilities, it was necessary to obtain an Act of Parliament calling in the outstanding money orders. Concurrent efforts were made to bring up the more recent arrears, and to prevent the possibility of new ones arising; and, in consequence of these measures, affairs are now in such a state that, at the end of August next, the liabilities of the department will be fully known, and the materials obtained for a general balance, which will then be struck forthwith.

On investigating the accounts, I found, to my great con-

cern, that the department was not only, as I had anticipated, unprofitable, but that it involved an annual loss of no less than 10,000*l.* It has, however, been found practicable, even with greatly increased perfection in the accounts, to introduce, by successive improvements, such simplification as will save the salaries of 50 clerks in the London Office alone; and this, combined with other important savings already effected, will, in all probability, render the department self-supporting in the course of the present year.

But your Lordship is aware that further important improvements are now in progress, by means of which I confidently expect the money-order department will be made to afford a satisfactory profit.

I may remark that the savings effected in this department have already exceeded my estimate, as laid before the select committee of the House of Commons on Postage of 1843 (p. 90).

From the facility with which the necessary changes, many of them difficult and complicated, have been effected in this department since it came under my immediate and exclusive direction, your Lordship will, perhaps, deem it not unreasonable to infer that, with similar means at my command, a like success may be obtained elsewhere; and the encouragement hence derived has augmented my earnest desire to attempt without delay improvements in other departments, for years contemplated, which, while they present many difficulties, are of no slight importance to the public service.

The complete consolidation of the two corps of letter-carriers is a promised measure of this description. This consolidation I first recommended in the year 1837, submitted to the Treasury in the year 1842, laid before the select committee on postage of 1843, and sustained through a severe examination. Up to that time it was opposed by the Post Office authorities, and not supported by the Treasury; but at the commencement of 1847 a decided step was taken in that direction, and with advantageous results.

My opinion of the value of the measure has never varied, and my desire for its adoption is, of course, greatly strengthened by finding it pressed on the Office by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose exhortations to the

same effect have now for twelve months been from time to time earnestly given.

But, after the maturest deliberation, I still feel impressed with the painful conviction that unless I could be placed, with reference to the departments concerned in the change, in a position similar to that which I hold with regard to the Money-Order Office, the attempt would not only fail, but might produce a state of serious insubordination.

Your Lordship will bear in mind that the improvement in question involves other changes, some of them of a very complicated nature, and such as could be effected only by a delicate and difficult process; I need not say that where the ramifications are so numerous, it is quite impossible to frame, *in prospectu*, any detailed plan which will not require very much of subsequent modification. The experience derived from each step of the process, will be required to govern the succeeding step. The improvements must be introduced on the tentative principle, and extended or varied, hastened or delayed, according as the peculiar feelings and opinions of parties concerned, or other circumstances, may require. In fine, the management will constantly demand immediate, confidential, and uninterrupted intercourse with those most conversant with details, or on whom the duty of immediate execution will devolve, as well as the exercise of an influence and authority limited only by due subordination to your Lordship.

In the absence of these aids, any attempt to effect the improvement in question would, in my opinion, be most inexpedient.

In the same category with this measure are various others, some of which are of pressing importance, at a time when there is so great a demand on the part of the Government for retrenchment and economy in every department of the public service; and, considering that every delay renders such improvements more and more difficult, I respectfully submit the importance of my being early placed in a position for entering upon them with safety and success.

I trust, my Lord, that in earnestly dwelling on these considerations as affecting the public interest, I advance no improper claim as regards myself. Your Lordship will, I am sure, remember that expectation of such promotion was

held out to me, contingent only on my demonstrating that I possess the requisite administrative capabilities, and that one object in placing the Money-Order Department under my immediate direction was to bring these capabilities to the test. With the result of this experiment your Lordship has been pleased to express entire satisfaction, and, combining this testimonial with the repeated expressions of approval with which your Lordship has honoured me during the two years of my service, I trust I am not assuming too much in regarding the conditions as fulfilled.

I am the more strongly impelled to ask for the fulfilment of the contingent expectation, because, in addition to the Treasury's demand and your Lordship's anxiety for economy, there is, from time to time, a manifestation of some disappointment in the public mind. It is naturally expected that, under your Lordship's sanction, I should effect the improvements in reference to which my appointment was made. And as the public is far from being fully aware of the difficulties under which I labour, and as I am of course precluded by my position from giving explanations, I am exposed to attacks which I must not repel, and suffer in my reputation, without being conscious of blame.

I have now finished a task which I began with reluctance, and which I feel much relieved to have drawn to a close. A more agreeable duty remains to be performed: it is to express my sincere thanks for the kind support with which your Lordship has been pleased to honour my efforts.

I have, &c.,

ROWLAND HILL.

The Most Noble
The MARQUIS of CLANRICARDE,
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX B. (p. 72.)

Further letter to Postmaster-General (Lord Clanricarde).

Hampstead, August 13th, 1849.

My dear Lord,

Knowing how fully your lordship's time and that of other ministers is occupied during the session of parliament, I have hitherto refrained from again requesting attention to my letter of January 3rd, but now that a period of comparative leisure has arrived, I feel that I ought not longer to postpone the irksome task.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter for the purpose of inviting a reperusal of it, and I think I may confidently appeal to your lordship's knowledge of the state of the department for supporting me when I say that the experience of the seven months which have elapsed since that letter was written has strengthened the grounds, both public and private, on which my application was based.

The various interviews with which I have been honoured by your lordship on nice and difficult points, arising in the course of business, would enable me to refer to many cases in which the public service has suffered from the continuance of the existing arrangements, while though this is doubtless a matter of inferior importance, such arrangements are inconsistent both with my personal comfort, and my pecuniary interests.

On these, however, I will not dwell, nor even with respect to the public service will I intrude on your attention as to more than one point out of the many which occupy my thoughts. I refer to the necessity for a general revision of salaries in the metropolitan offices, which after being so long delayed now presses with great urgency. It is due in justice to the clerks that their claims, whether well or ill founded,

should be set at rest by adjudication; but notwithstanding your lordship's earnest desire that the task should be accomplished, I have, I believe, satisfied you that in my present position it would be unsafe to attempt even those improvements which are necessarily preliminary to the still more difficult task of revising the salaries.

Earnestly begging your lordship will be pleased to take the necessary steps for effecting a decision on my letter of January 3rd,

I have, &c., &c.,

ROWLAND HILL.

The Most Noble
The MARQUIS of CLANRICARDE,
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX C. (p. 72.)

Lord Clanricarde's reply.

Brighton, August 23rd, 1849.

My dear Sir,

I have read your letter reverting to that which you addressed to me on the 3rd of last January with much regret.

I am sorry you consider our existing official arrangements inconsistent with your comfort and your interest. I see no possibility of their being changed at present.

I could not alter them myself, and I could not send forward to the Treasury your letter of the 3rd of January without previously communicating with Colonel Maberly.

I have no reason to believe the Treasury would take at this moment any steps to put you in the position you desire to hold. And my own opinion is that, constituted as the office now is, we can proceed gradually and steadily to carry into effect many improvements which you have suggested or which may hereafter occur to you. You enumerate in your letter of January 3rd several of importance which we have achieved without even temporary inconvenience or failure, others have been effected since that date, and I have little fear of not being able to have properly executed almost any alteration of the result of which we might be well assured.

I see no reason why you should not complete a scale of salaries for country offices and messengers as soon as the returns you have called for may be perfected, or why such a scale should not be at once adopted, and gradually, and not slowly enforced. And in like manner, the metropolitan offices might afterwards be dealt with.

With respect to your personal feelings and interests I can of course say nothing. I am only gratified that you should feel satisfied with the support which it has been my duty, and I assure you a sincere pleasure, to me to afford you.

I remain, &c., &c.,

Clanricarde.

R. Hill, Esq.
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX D. (p. 79.)

To the Postmaster-General.

1. In obedience to your lordship's instructions, I beg to submit my views as to further measures for reducing the Sunday duties of the Post Office, and as to other improvements connected therewith.

2. The importance of affording to all connected with the Post Office the utmost amount of rest on Sunday that is consistent with a due regard to public convenience having led to measures for the total suspension of money-order business on that day throughout England and Wales, it is very satisfactory to remark, that neither the announcement of the change, nor the experience of it thus far, has brought on the Department a single complaint from the public; and I confidently anticipate like satisfactory results should the Treasury concur in your lordship's recent recommendation of a similar measure in Ireland and Scotland.

3. Your lordship will recollect that, in considering the above improvement, the importance of a similar relief as respects other duties was kept in mind; and, from the investigations which have been made, there can be no doubt that a further very important relief as relates to Sunday work may be effected in all the provincial offices.

4. The consideration of this question, however, is closely connected with that of a measure mainly relating to public convenience, but which, contrary to first appearances, proves on investigation to have a direct tendency towards the same object of Sunday relief.

5. The transmission of letters through London on the Sunday, your lordship is aware, has long been a desideratum, having been recommended by the Commissioners of Post-Office Inquiry in 1836 (7 Report, p. 9); and by a committee

of the House of Commons in 1818 (3 Report, p. x); and again suggested by several members of a committee of the House of Lords in 1847 (Report of the Select Committee. Ev. 430—445).

6. The obstacles to the adoption of these recommendations were, first, an assumption that it would increase the Sunday work of the Department; second, a fear that it would lead to a Sunday delivery in London.

7. Both these apprehensions, as will be shown hereafter, are groundless.

8. Since the time when the above recommendations were made, the importance of the change has greatly increased, the Sunday average letters involved in the consideration having advanced since 1836 from 5,000 or 6,000 to 50,000 or 60,000, or ten-fold.

9. The importance of the change will be still more manifest on reference to the fact, that this present number of London "forward letters" for a single day much exceeds what was in 1836 the corresponding number for a whole week, for the expediting of which it was determined by Government, on the recommendation of the Commissioners of Post-Office Inquiry, to establish day mails at an estimated cost of 15,000*l.* a year (7 Report, pp. 5 and 121).

10. The evil of the present arrangement, already so great, is constantly increasing, partly because of the general increase of letters, but mainly because of the centralising tendency of the railways. The greatly increased speed of conveyance, too, obviously tends to make any detention more severely felt; and the inconvenience is particularly serious when, as occasionally happens, the detention falls on a mail from the East or West Indies.

11. The evil of detention has been found so serious, that in several cases the rule has been evaded, either by making use of other existing channels for the conveyance of the mails sent on ordinary days through London, or by the actual establishment of Sunday cross-posts; either of which arrangements obviously involves increased expense, trouble, liability to error, perplexity to the public, and additional Sunday work. Thus the mail between Winchester and Birmingham is sent on the Sunday through Exeter; and again, the correspondence between the towns served by the

North Eastern Railway and those served by the North-Western Railway is conveyed on a Sunday by a mail-cart, expressly running on that day between Cambridge and Wolverton, through Newport Pagnel, a distance of 47 miles —an arrangement involving an expense of 148*l.* per annum (98*l.* for the cart and 50*l.* for additional sorting at Newport Pagnel), besides a direct increase in Sunday occupation.

12. Meantime the mail trains, excepting a few of the day mails, run as on other days, and, save as regards London, convey letters as usual. Even to London nearly all letters from Ireland, Scotland, and the out-ports, as also all foreign and colonial letters whatever, are brought, as on other days, the same being partly assorted at the chief office on the Sunday, for delivery or for forwarding, as the case may be, the next morning.

13. For the performance of these duties and for the selection and delivery of the "States" (letters addressed chiefly to the higher offices of Government), twenty-six persons are ordinarily employed at the chief office on Sunday, their time of occupation being, on the average, six hours. The arrival of a heavy mail from abroad requires a greater force.

14. To remove the evils of this weekly suspension of the ordinary transmission through London, and the anomalies arising out of it, and with the view of diminishing the amount of Sunday work in the Department as a whole, I propose that the *existing mail trains* should bring up on the Sunday, in addition to the present bags, the *forward stamped letters*—excluding, however, newspapers, parliamentary proceedings, and all documents not paying the full letter rates. These limitations *will avert, on the one hand, any possibility of a Sunday delivery of letters to the London public*, and, on the other, any unnecessary addition to the Sunday accounts.

15. The restriction to stamped letters may perhaps cause some inconvenience to the public, especially at first, arising out of their difficulty of knowing what correspondence passes through London and what does not; but as it is in contemplation to confine the receipt of money paid letters to the chief office of each provincial town, and as the deputies can be instructed whenever the want of a stamp would cause the detention of a letter to state as much when it is presented for prepayment (an arrangement which will be facilitated

by the comparative leisure of blank post day,) it appears to me that the danger of inconvenience to the public will be small, and certainly far less than that which now results from the doubt as to whether even stamped letters posted on blank post day will be detained or not.

16. The inland letters thus brought in, as they would require no accounts either to be examined or made out, would be despatched by the existing day mails in those cases where this would be necessary to secure their earlier delivery on the Monday. All the other letters, whether inland or not, would be sent by the night mails. It is obvious that, under this arrangement, none of the letters in question could be delivered anywhere on the Sunday.

17. I should also strongly advise that in the performance of the above-mentioned duties at the London office no infringement should be allowed on the hours of divine service; the whole interval from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon being left perfectly free; and I should propose to extend this arrangement as far as practicable to the existing duties at that office.

18. By availing ourselves of the time now occupied by the clerks of the travelling post office in assorting such of the letters in question as now reach them by the special cross-posts, I am of opinion that a force of twenty-five men, at the expense of 300*l.* per annum, will suffice for the duties now proposed; and when it is considered that in the single anomaly referred to above the plan will effect a saving of 148*l.* a year, it appears highly probable that the total reductions effected by the improvement will fully compensate such additional expense.

19. I should add that, although Mr. Bokenham, whom I have consulted, sees no difficulty as regards the practicability of the general measure, he is of opinion that little aid can be afforded by the clerks of the travelling post office; consequently, though willing to try with twenty-five additional men, his impression is that a somewhat larger number will be necessary.

20. As regards the effect of the proposed change on the amount of Sunday occupation, it is manifest, from what has already been stated, that for the increased force at the chief office there is, to say the least, a large set-off elsewhere. A

further examination, however, will put the matter in a light still more satisfactory.

21. It is notorious that a blank post is everywhere preceded and followed by a greater amount of correspondence than usual. Thus, in London, the average number of letters is greater on Saturday by six per cent., and on Monday by 25 per cent., than on other days. But, as respects the correspondence sent through London, Saturday evening is at present in most towns a blank post time. It therefore follows that such correspondence is despatched from the provinces in unusual amount on Saturday morning, and on Sunday morning or evening, according as there may or may not be a Sunday day mail.

22. Now each of these augmentations tends to produce additional Sunday work, both to the Department and to the public. For the letters in the first category are for the most part distributed by the Post Office and read by the public on the Sunday, and those in the second are for the most part written by the public and despatched by the office on Sunday.

23. It is obvious therefore that, as far as relates to the letters in question, the proposed change would entirely get rid of Sunday work, as respects the public; while, as respects the Department, it would exchange work now dispersed through nearly a thousand offices for concentrated occupation in one—the latter requiring a less proportionate force, and falling on such time as to be dealt with without infringement on the hours of divine service. It is manifest therefore that, as respects general supersession of Sunday work, the balance is in favour of the proposed plan.

24. The advantage, however, by no means rests here. The plan will be an important aid, as will be shown hereafter, to measures for relieving the provincial offices as regards Sunday business in general.

25. As regards the chief office, the force now proposed to be employed on the Sunday would suffice for nearly all the ordinary duties necessarily belonging to that day, and thus it would be possible to defer most of the work now done on the Sunday till after midnight; and thus to avoid any material increase in the Sunday force. This latter change, however, implies the previous consolidation of the inland and district post offices.

26. Nay, were it thought necessary, there are means, arising in part out of the comparative leisure at most country offices on the Saturday, by which Sunday work at the chief office might be reduced considerably below its present amount. As, however, these means involve some complexity, and possibly additional expense, I do not propose them at present. But hereafter, should they prove sufficiently simple to be reduced to practice, and not too expensive for adoption, there can be no doubt that this prevention of the weekly delay or irregularity in the vast correspondence which ordinarily passes through London, so far from involving any increase in the amount of Sunday work, would, independently of its aid to other measures of relief, directly produce a material diminution of the same.

27. I now come to the special question of relief to the provincial offices. The measures in contemplation appear in the following extract from my minute of Dec. 6, 1848 :—

"That every office in England and Wales be closed for all purposes from ten to five o'clock on the Sunday, except for the receipt and despatch of any mails in the interval; but that a box be left open for the posting of stamped and unpaid letters. Further, that there be only one delivery of letters on that day."

28. This proposal, having been referred by your lordship to the English surveyors, has met with their unanimous and earnest concurrence. It appears, however, that although the general rule is to have only one delivery on the Sunday, there are several towns in which there are two. The discontinuance of the additional delivery, although, with one doubtful exception, approved of by the surveyors, might, nevertheless, in the absence of other alterations, produce serious complaint from the public: the Sunday transmission of letters through London, however, would, as regards most towns in England and Wales, withdraw so large a proportion of letters from the second delivery (already very light), that the little delay in the delivery of the residuum would be of no moment. Such withdrawal, however, it must be admitted, is, in relation to public convenience, an objection, *pro tanto*, to the plan; but, as the delivery of these letters on the Monday morning would be made conjointly with that of many letters now detained till Monday afternoon, or, in some instances,

till the next day, the measure, as a whole, would probably give satisfaction even in the comparatively few towns where the delay would occur. Everywhere else it would certainly be felt as a great boon.

29. This change, therefore, being considered as part of the general measure, I have no hesitation in recommending that (with possibly one or two exceptions, which, if necessary, will be submitted hereafter) the second delivery be abolished throughout England and Wales; Ireland and Scotland being left for after-consideration; and that the plan, as proposed in my minute of December 6th, be now carried into effect. The reports of the surveyors are submitted.

30. It may perhaps assist your lordship in deciding the important question now submitted, if I briefly recapitulate the results, negative as well as positive, of the whole of the measure.

31. First, It will prevent irregularity or delay (often amounting to twenty-four hours) in the transmission of probably 50,000 letters a week.

32. Second, It will add little or nothing to the expenses of the Department.

33. Third, It will cause no increase whatever of mail-trains or other means of transmission, to or from London, on the Sunday.

34. Fourth, It will neither bring in nor take out a single London letter, and therefore cannot cause either a Sunday delivery or a Sunday collection in London.

35. Fifth, While it will not affect the number of Sunday collections elsewhere, it will materially reduce the number of Sunday deliveries.

36. Sixth, While, so far as the public is concerned, it will leave matters precisely as they now stand in London and the vicinity, it will tend greatly to reduce Sunday letter-writing and reading elsewhere.

37. Seventh, It is true that as regards the London Post Office; it will, in the first instance require the attendance of about 25 persons on the Sunday, but these will not be allowed in the slightest degree to infringe on the hours of divine service; and I am of opinion that eventually even this limited attendance may be avoided, and the Sunday work in the London office reduced much below its present amount. On

the other hand, as regards the provincial offices, it will release a very large body of persons now engaged even during the hours of divine service, and will thus afford to many hundreds, perhaps even to some thousands, needful rest, and the opportunity of attending the services of the day.

38. Should your lordship approve of these proposals, I submit that the necessary application to be made to the Treasury.

39. Some important measures of relief to the rural messengers and rural receivers on the Sunday, which have been suggested by Mr. W. Johnson, will still remain for your lordship's consideration; but, as they are not essential parts of the main plan, I propose to submit them hereafter in a separate minute.

ROWLAND HILL.

February 3, 1849.

APPENDIX E. (p. 94.)

Letter to Postmaster-General deprecating Compulsory Employment on the Sunday.

(*Private and Confidential.*)

General Post Office,
October 18th, 1849.

My dear Lord,

I am greatly alarmed at your Lordship's note, and earnestly entreat that you will not authorize Mr. Bokenham to compel the attendance of a single man. During your Lordship's absence in Ireland, the excited state of the public mind made it necessary to take a decided course relative to this matter; and as it was always intended and fully understood by Mr. Bokenham that none but volunteers were to be employed on the Sunday duties, I did not hesitate to contradict the report which had been most unjustly raised to the effect that the men, notwithstanding conscientious objections to the work, were to be forced to engage in it.

The pledge which, under the circumstances, I felt warranted and compelled to give, I trust your Lordship will enable me fully to maintain.

I am still ready to undertake the responsibility of the sorting by volunteers, provided your Lordship will give me the powers which, by your approval of my minute of the 15th inst., were conferred on Mr. Bokenham. I submit, therefore, that there can be no necessity for resorting to any compulsion; and, considering the manner in which the public has held me responsible for this measure, I trust I may be permitted to say that, so far as my own feelings are concerned, I would rather abandon the improvement altogether than run the risk of compelling any one to do that to which he has a conscientious objection.

Until I received your Lordship's note I had no conception of any difficulty or hesitation on Mr. Bokenham's part. Mr. Tilley was present when Mr. Bokenham expressed his readiness to undertake the duty on the conditions stated in my minute of the 15th. Mr. Tilley read the minute a few hours later, and confirmed the accuracy of its statements.

I need hardly say that I shall carefully follow the advice with which your Lordship has honoured me; but, as I am most anxious that this matter should be settled without delay, I beg that should you be unable to fulfil your intention of coming to town to-morrow, I may be favoured with immediate instructions to wait upon you at Brighton.

I have, &c.,

ROWLAND HILL.

The Most Noble
The MARQUIS of CLANRICARDE,
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX F. (p. 130.)

Letter to Mr. Warburton.

Hampstead, November 16th, 1850.

My dear Sir,

As you have kindly undertaken to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer on my behalf, I beg to trouble you with a brief recapitulation of the case.

You will recollect that in my late correspondence with the Postmaster-General I took the liberty to remind his Lordship of the promise under which I was induced to accept my present post, of the serious obstacles to improvements as well as of the great danger of insubordination in the office arising from my present anomalous position, and of the acknowledged fulfilment of the only condition on which my promotion was to depend.

It is now four years since the promise was made—two years have elapsed since I first claimed its performance; and though no objection is raised to the justice of the claim, no steps have been taken towards its practical acknowledgment. Additional circumstances, which I shall shortly state, now compel me to press for an immediate change.

According to present arrangements, Colonel Maberly has a staff of about fifty clerks, formed into departments, each department having a head, familiar with all the details thereof, and capable, under instructions, of preparing nearly all the necessary minutes, thus relieving Colonel Maberly himself of what would otherwise be an insupportable amount of drudgery. As regards the Money Order Department, I am similarly circumstanced; but for the transaction of general business, though I believe most of the difficult cases, particularly the obnoxious ones, devolve upon me, my

whole staff consists of but three clerks, at comparatively low salaries. Nor could I be supplied with an efficient corps, save at the unwarrantable expense of several thousands a year, *i. e.*, an amount making some approach to the actual cost of Colonel Maberly's staff.

Neither would it avail to withhold the above cases from me, as all are more or less connected with those improvements which it is my especial duty to effect and maintain.

Viewing my position as temporary, I have endeavoured to meet the exigence by great personal exertion, and by obtaining competent assistance at my own cost, in which latter course, limited and imperfect as any such arrangements must necessarily be, I have already expended several hundred pounds.

Still I am obliged to investigate each case myself, and substantially to prepare the necessary minutes: and when, in addition to all this, it is considered that from the first I have rarely had less than five or six important and difficult improvements in hand at once, I scarcely need assure you that the labour has been very severe. Indeed, it has proved quite too much for my health, and, according to the opinion of my medical attendant (Mr. Hodgson) it has induced a disorder, which, though yet but incipient, threatens the most serious consequences, unless promptly and effectually checked.

Effectual rest, the remedy prescribed, however, is incompatible with my present position. For though the Postmaster-General has most kindly acceded to every request I have made for leave of absence, yet, seeing that I have no assistant capable of undertaking my duties (as is done for Colonel Maberly by the assistant-secretary) any partial rest thus obtained entails a serious accumulation of work at its close. These are the considerations which oblige me to press for immediate change, though, independently of them, and even of the promise adverted to above, I trust a consideration of what has been effected during the last four years will show my claim to be well founded.

To pass over numerous improvements, many of which have failed to excite attention, not so much from any want of importance, as from their smoothness in operation (the only case of trouble being the recent improvement in the Sunday

duties, when a temporary outcry arose from a cabal within the office, I may particularise the reform of the Money Order Department, the only department consigned to my charge), a reform by which, with increased convenience to the public, increased accuracy in the accounts, better pay, and more relaxation to the clerks, a saving has been effected, already amounting, all things duly considered, to a total of about 37,000*l.*, and which is now going on at the rate probably of about 13,000*l.* a year, with a clear prospect of increase.

This, however, constitutes but a small portion of what, even with the very limited means at my command, I have been able to save positively or negatively in the Post Office generally.

In addition to the injury to health involved in the labour by which these improvements have been achieved, I have had to submit to a sacrifice of income. Mine is, I believe, the only important office in the whole department with no scale of increase of salary; but for the special limitation which my promised promotion would remove, I should be now in the receipt of 1,500*l.* a year, that is 400*l.* a year less than Colonel Maberly had during his first five years of office, and 500*l.* a year less than he has at present.

If Government is still of opinion that it cannot immediately fulfil its promise, I beg that you will urge my claim at least so far as to press that a period may now be fixed beyond which the complete performance of the promise shall not be delayed; and that, seeing the impossibility of continuing the present state of things, arrangements be at once made for the nearest approximation to such performance that may be deemed practicable.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

ROWLAND HILL.

P.S. I have enclosed a copy of a letter with which you favoured me on the 27th November, 1846, and which bears strongly on the case.

HENRY WARBURTON, Esq.

APPENDIX G. (p. 143.)

Brief Memoir of the late Thomas Wright Hill, Esq., F.R.A.S.

THOMAS WRIGHT HILL, a member of our Society almost from its first institution, died at Bruce Terrace, Tottenham, on the 13th of last June, in the eighty-ninth year of his age.

He was born at Kidderminster in April 1763. Even in early childhood he exhibited a strong taste for study and an insatiable appetite for books, of which he devoured all that came in his way. Amongst others of his great favourites were the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'Paradise Lost,' and Stackhouse's 'History of the Bible,' in two volumes folio.

He was educated at the Grammar School of his native town, where, as usual, mathematics formed no part of the course; in common arithmetic he received instruction elsewhere. As his introduction to the study of geometry was a little curious, it is described as nearly as possible in his own words:—

"A worthy man, a friend of my father's, was appointed joint trustee with him to administer the estate of a common acquaintance who had lately died. The latter being a man of somewhat secluded habits and of a studious and philosophic turn of mind, some of the good people of Kidderminster set him down as in league with the Evil One. This gentleman, knowing that I was fond of books and of study, had bequeathed to me two volumes, which, however, my father's friend and coadjutor very strongly recommended him to burn, without allowing me even to see them, as they bore a suspicious appearance, and came from a dangerous quarter. My father, who was somewhat less credulous than his neighbours, said, "Oh, let the boy have them;" whereupon were put into my hands—a 'Manual of Geography' and a copy of Euclid's 'Elements.'"

On the latter work he immediately fastened with all the delight and energy of youthful enthusiasm; and mastering its contents, proceeded, unassisted, to algebra and the higher

mathematics, especially those portions connected with astronomy, to the study of which his attention had been attracted by a lecture from James Ferguson, which it was his good fortune to attend, and which excited in him so great a love for the science, that it always remained his favourite pursuit.

On this subject in after life, he delivered many lectures as a fellow of the Philosophical Institution of Birmingham, doing besides as much in the way of observation and calculation as his close occupation and limited means would allow; also making it a subject of school instruction, and drawing up monthly reports upon the aspect of the heavens, which were read and explained to his pupils at Hazelwood School, near Birmingham, and in later years to the pupils of Bruce Castle, Tottenham.

In the year 1835, on his retirement from active duty as an instructor, this predilection was remembered by his former pupils; and the testimonial selected by them was a large refracting telescope by Tulley, with an inscription "indicative of their veneration for his unaffected simplicity of character, and their high respect for his abilities as an instructor and his virtues as a man."

As late as October 1847, in his eighty-fifth year, he repaired with his telescope to Willingdon, near the coast of Sussex, for the purpose of observing the great eclipse of the sun, an opportunity to which he had looked forward for years, but in which he was unhappily disappointed by the cloudy state of the weather.

Even to within a month or two of his death, he was occupied in framing a system of nomenclature for the stars; his object being that the name of every star should indicate approximately its declination and right ascension.

Though on many of the various subjects to which at different times he devoted his attention he could never be prevailed upon to prepare any work for the press, or even to throw the results of his investigations and reflections into a complete form, he would occasionally commit his thoughts to writing on detached points.

About ten years ago, however, he constructed, with considerable labour, a set of tables for facilitating the formation of maps on the stereographic projection, for the use of his pupils; as also a set of tables of binarian logarithms.

About fifty years ago he devised a system of short-hand writing, which by various changes from time to time, almost to the end of his life, he at length reduced to a complete philosophical alphabet, without depriving it of its stenographic character. He has left behind him no small amount of result from his oral instruction and conversation. Much originality of thought, fertility of illustration, the observation of a long life, and the stores of a very retentive memory, rendered them attractive in a high degree. It was particularly interesting to hear him describe as matters of actual recollection events which the present generation regards as long ago consigned to the province of history. He had been familiarly acquainted with men who were enrolled for the defence of Government against the rebellion of 1745. He remembered the imprisonment of Wilkes, and of course all the great events of the American War and the French Revolution; and in dwelling upon these he generally reproduced in a racy manner the popular opinions and speculations of the respective periods.

His vivacity and love of employment continued to be marked traits in his character to within even a few weeks of his death; nor did his fondness for young persons or their attachment to him ever suffer material abatement. Long after the period of his release from his professional duties he continued to teach as an amateur; until, at the age of fourscore, by the partial failure of both sight and hearing, this practice became painfully laborious. Still his activity in pursuit of science was unabated, as in 1845, in his eighty-third year, he read at the meeting of the British Association at Cambridge a paper explanatory of a new system of arithmetical notation, in which the names of the numbers were made by virtue of arithmetical significancy given to the vowels and diphthongs to indicate their precise meaning by their structure.

His closing years he always spoke of as the happiest period of his life. Possessed of a competency according to his very moderate desires, never at a loss for occupation,

> "Studious of laborious ease
> Not slothful,"

encompassed by his family, and seeing in the decided success and acknowledged usefulness of his sons, much more than

enough to satisfy all that he had ever known of ambition; looking back with frequently expressed gratification and thankfulness on the continued course of moral and material improvement presented to him throughout his lengthened acquaintance with human affairs; his taste for literature, unabated, and his relish of life almost as keen as ever, he, nevertheless, met death with the most unruffled calmness and profound resignation, full of gratitude for the past and hope for the future.

The celebrated establishment of Hazelwood, removed to Bruce Castle in 1827,* with which Mr. Hill's name is much connected, and in which he gave his personal assistance, was founded, in 1819, jointly by himself and his sons, most of whom took a share in its management. The success of these gentlemen not only in education, but in public business, is a testimony to the talent, judgment, and goodness of their common parent, which renders all other testimony superfluous. It is not usual to enumerate the sons of a deceased fellow, but in the present case he made them, and they have made themselves, a necessary part of any obituary account of him. Mr. Matthew Hill, commissioner in bankruptcy for the Bristol district, recorder of Birmingham, and late member for Hull—Mr. Edwin Hill, known as the inventor of the envelope machine, and inspector of postage-stamps—Mr. Rowland Hill, whose services as secretary to the South Australian Commission, in the foundation of that colony, must be mentioned, and whose career, as the reformer of the Post Office, and the originator of the uniform penny rate, needs no mention at all—Mr. Arthur Hill, whose life has been devoted to the cause of education, in the well-known institutions above mentioned—and Mr. Frederic Hill, many years inspector of prisons, and now assistant-secretary to the Postmaster-General—all bear the testimony of their own reputation to that of their father. That father was, indeed, most fortunate, not only in the distinction gained by his sons, but in the length of life which enabled him to see the full success of their career, and to know that his share in it was, we almost venture to say, as fully appreciated by the public as it is gratefully acknowledged by themselves.

* This is not correct. Bruce Castle School was opened in 1827, but Hazelwood School was not parted with until 1833.—Ed.

APPENDIX H. (p. 200.)

Letter to Postmaster-General (Lord Canning).

General Post Office, 18th June, 1853.

My dear Lord,

As your Lordship is already acquainted with many of the statements I am about to make, you will at once perceive that in writing at such length my view is in accordance with your understood wish so to prepare the case for the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to supersede the necessity of reference to former correspondence on the subject.

In September 1842, in the midst of what the Treasury was pleased to consider an able discharge of duties connected with the institution of my system of Penny Postage, I learnt that my services were no longer required, and I spent the next four years in private life, except so much of the year 1843 as was occupied in preparing and laying before a committee of the House of Commons a full exposition of the operation of the Post Office as then conducted, in the course of which I demonstrated that the existing system of management, besides depriving the public of many reasonable facilities, involved an enormous loss of revenue.

In December, 1846, my friend Mr. Warburton intimated to me the desire of Her Majesty's Government again to employ me in developing and perfecting my plans, and that they were prepared to offer me a permanent engagement at the Post Office.

Although I was then engaged in avocations more highly remunerative than the proffered appointment, I at once avowed myself ready to accept it if I could be assured of sufficient authority to secure the success of my measures—a stipulation which, while reasonable under any circumstances

was rendered imperative by my former experience of the obstructions and injury that improvements were exposed to in consequence of the state of feeling which prevailed at the Post Office.

I was given to understand that I might count on the support of the Postmaster-General and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and that if I showed that I possessed the requisite administrative powers, (the subsequent full acknowledgment of which happily relieves me from the necessity of entering on that part of the subject) I might look forward to be promoted at no distant period to a position of higher authority, which was understood at the time and subsequently admitted to mean the post of sole secretary.

Without for a single moment doubting the sincerity with which these promises were made, I nevertheless, after much anxious deliberation, arrived at the conclusion that they were not sufficiently explicit to justify me in placing myself in a position so liable to failure, which in the public mind would naturally be attributed to defects in the system itself, or to mismanagement on my part, rather than to opposing influences which could not be generally known.

My prospects of effecting improvements under the discouraging circumstances in which I knew I should be placed did not seem clear enough to justify me in incurring the risk of becoming myself an instrument for destroying that universal reliance on the soundness of my project which I felt to be my surest means of obtaining ultimate success.

But I was in the hands of my friends, and I shall not be censured for deferring to the opinion of such men as Mr. Warburton, Lord Overstone, Mr. Hawes, and Mr. Raikes Currie.

I consequently entered on my present office, and have now served under three Postmasters-General; and I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep sense of the kindness and confidence with which I have been treated, and my full recognition of the efforts made from time to time, with more or less of success, to remove impediments, and to give freer scope to my exertions; but the evils which I foresaw and which have come upon me in full measure are beyond the reach of palliatives. The system on which we are proceeding is radically bad, and stands scarcely more

strongly condemned by myself than by my colleague Colonel Maberly.

Though possessed of secretarial authority, I am, if I may so express myself, a general almost without an army—when I entered the office I found, of course, the clerks regarding the senior secretary as having the first if not the only claim on their services; and without desiring for a moment to reflect on them or on any one else, I become every day more convinced that without harmonious views, a joint jurisdiction, even supposing equality to be fully and practically admitted, is utterly incompatible with the requirements of the office.

Looking then back upon the events of the six years during which my promised promotion has been delayed, I feel bound to state that if in December 1846 I could have foreseen what has occurred, I could not have accepted the offer then made, nor do I believe that under like circumstances my friends would have advised me to the step.

That much has been done is, of course, not to be denied by me; but it has been accomplished amidst sore trials, and with risks to health which my duty to my family would not have allowed me to incur.

Let me then stand acquitted before your Lordship and the Chancellor of the Exchequer of either impatience or presumption when I urge in the strongest manner consistent with the respect which I owe to my superiors, my claim to the prompt fulfilment of the understanding on which alone I consented to take my seat at the Post Office.

As every statement like that which I am called upon by your Lordship to make is, of necessity, tinctured with egotism I gladly quit that part of the task which relates to my own personal interests, and proceed to show that the change which I claim is equally demanded by the public service.

In 1847 I was directed by the Postmaster-General to report on the state of the Money Order Office, which resulted in my recommending several large retrenchments and other improvements which were adopted by his Lordship and the Treasury, but which Colonel Maberly declined to take the responsibility of carrying into effect; in consequence of which the secretarial authority of that Department was consigned to me alone.

By a report of Mr. Barth, the head of the Department, which I called for soon afterwards, it appears that the accounts were then so deeply in arrear that great doubt was entertained whether they ever could be made complete, and the expense of their completion, supposing it to be possible, was estimated at 10,000*l.* No general balance had ever been struck since the institution of the Department in 1839, and the liabilities were of unknown amount.

To avoid the great expense of bringing up the arrears, and to insure the extinction of unknown liabilites, it was found necessary to obtain an Act of Parliament calling in the outstanding Money Orders. Concurrent efforts were made to bring up the more recent arrears, and to prevent the possibility of new ones arising. And eventually the liabilities of the Department were ascertained and a general balance was struck which has since been repeated quarterly.

On a full investigation of the accounts I found that the Department was not only, as I had anticipated, unprofitable, but involved an annual loss of no less than 10,000*l.*

I, however, found it practicable to introduce, by successive improvements, such simplification in the arrangements as, with increased convenience to the public, and increased accuracy in the accounts, with better pay and more relaxation to the clerks, to convert this loss into a gain, which amounted for the year 1850 to 3,236*l.*, and which, under my brother Mr. Frederic Hill, who has subsequently carried on the Department in the same spirit of improvement, amounted last year to 11,664*l.* making an effective saving within five years of upwards of 21,000*l.* per annum.

As regards the Post Office generally, the amount of saving which may still be effected is a matter of so much uncertainty, that I hesitate to offer any estimate. I can only say that if it may be assumed, as I think it may, that every Department of the service can be gradually improved to the same extent as the Money Order Office (the only one which has been confided entirely to my care), it follows that in the course of a few years, not only may the public be better served, and the men, if necessary, better paid, but savings may be effected to an extent of about 200,000*l.* a year in addition to the saving of 100,000*l.* a year, which, if required, I should be prepared to show has already been made.

But of late a new motive has arisen for the proposed change. The augmentation of letters is not only in constant progress, but has for some time moved forward with increasing celerity. Without some change, no doubt is entertained in the office, that the present building will soon be not only too small for the transaction of the business, but so much too small, as that no increase of its limits by practicable additions will answer the requirements of the service; and consequently that a most expensive outlay—probably not less than half a million—will be required for a new Post Office.

If placed, however, in the position contemplated, I shall be enabled, as I confidently expect, to make, under your Lordship's sanction, such improvements as will avert this impending necessity for years, if not remove it altogether.

The result of my experiments in the Money Order Office has been to show the great power which the simplification of arrangements has in lessening the quantity of labour and as a consequence, the quantity of space required for its performance.

When, five years ago, I took the secretarial control of the Money Order department, the building appropriated thereto was fully occupied, and negotiations were in progress for purchasing land to extend the accommodations. At present, notwithstanding an increase of business to the amount of one-third, there is such ample room that no extension is likely to be required for many years to come.

My knowledge of the other departments of the Post Office enables me to state, with some confidence, my opinion, that similar improvements may be extended to those also, and with the like beneficial results. At the present time, a postponement of building, though but for a few years, is of great importance. Several projects for bringing railways into the heart of the metropolis, so as to make them available for mere local transit, are on foot. And from some years' experience, first as a director and afterwards as chairman of the Brighton Railway Company, I feel justified in predicting that in some shape or other, some such project will be realized: I also foresee that such change must produce results in which both the Post Office authorities and the proprietors of the railways will have a common interest, and from overtures which have been made to the Department by

some of the projectors, I think it highly probable, that whatever changes in the Post Office may be thereby rendered necessary or desirable, will not have to be made altogether, perhaps not mainly, at the cost of Government.

But however this may be, it can scarcely be doubted that the effect of such railways must be to reduce the value of any outlay made irrespective of this disturbance in the present system of Metropolitan communication, since it is hardly possible that any buildings that might now be put up would be found adapted, either in position or arrangement, to the altered state of things.

Having now concluded the financial part of the subject, I beg your Lordship's attention to the new sources of anxiety which have been opened, and to the possibility of allaying that anxiety by substituting a unity of executive power for its present divided state.

The vast increase which has taken place of late years in the facilities for locomotion and the conveyance of merchandise, has led to a wide spread desire, I might almost say a clamorous demand, for further facilities in the transmission of letters. On some points this is the result of ignorance as to what is practicable or even possible, while on others it relates to changes which I have long had in view, but which under present impediments I cannot undertake.

The experience of the last thirteen years has satisfied me, that if our Post Office is to retain its present position, and to remain the model for those of other nations, and still more if it is to attain that high perfection to which your Lordship's enlightened and vigorous administration seems to open the way, we must not only continue in the course of improvement, but increase our speed. I do not allude to reduction of rates; but to what, in the present cheapness of postage, the public mind is much more intent upon, viz., frequency, celerity, and exact regularity in transmission and delivery. Inconveniences which, while the whole system of commercial intercourse was characterized by dearness, infrequency, and slowness, attracted but little attention, now rise to importance in the eyes of the sufferer by the effect of comparison, and remedy is demanded with a promptitude quite unheard of in former times, and which is unattainable without energetic and cordial co-operation in the higher

departments of the executive, and ready obedience and zealous activity in all the subordinates.

Having written thus far, and having also carefully considered every statement and every remark I have made, I feel it my duty to say, that after all the deliberation required by so grave a question, I have arrived at the settled conviction that the existing state of things cannot continue; and I therefore respectfully request that in considering the present application, such continuance may not be regarded as a possible alternative.

I am sure your Lordship will believe me incapable of dealing lightly with that connexion with the Post Office on which I set so great and just a value. To devise and bring into operation, so far as it has been effected, my system of Penny Postage, has been the cherished object of the best years of my life, interest in its progress, whether I am an instrument or not in promoting it, will ever retain the firmest hold on my mind, and would suffice to keep me in any course, but one which I feel to be inconsistent alike with my private and my public duty.

* * * * * *

The Right Hon.
VISCOUNT CANNING.
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX I. (p. 233.)

Memorandum by Sir Rowland Hill on the Net Revenue of the Post Office.

MUCH difference of opinion has arisen as to the amount of net revenue or profit of the Post Office department, *i.e.* the excess of receipt above expenditure; some estimating it at upwards of 1,500,000*l.* per annum, others affirming that it is really less than 400,000*l.*

This difference of opinion appears to arise from different views being entertained on the two following points:—

1. As to whether certain items should be included in the receipt.

2. As to whether certain other items should be included in the expenditure.

I may premise, that the subject of net revenue has to be viewed in two aspects. First, as to its absolute amount, and, secondly, as to its comparative amount when contrasted with the net revenue obtained before the establishment of Penny Postage. I propose, therefore, to consider the question from both points of view.

First.—As to the absolute amount of net revenue.

Under the head of receipt, the items regarding which there is a difference of opinion, are:—

(*a.*) The postage of the Government correspondence.

(*b.*) The proceeds of the impressed stamps on newspapers.

(*a.*) The postage of the Government correspondence is included in the ordinary amount of gross receipt, but it is contended by some that it ought to be excluded.

The amount of Government postage is, on the average, about . .	£150,000	per annum.*
Of which that of the Post Office itself is about	40,000	„
Leaving for the other Departments about	£110,000	„

The postage of the Post Office itself cannot affect the Net Revenue, seeing that it is included in the expenditure as well as in the gross receipt. It may, therefore, be left out of consideration.

As regards the correspondence of the other Government Departments, if it were right to deduct the postage of it from the revenue of the Post Office, it is obvious that it would also be right to deduct the cost of its conveyance and delivery from the expenditure of the Post Office. The net revenue would therefore be reduced, not by the full sum of 110,000*l.* above mentioned, but by that amount less the cost of conveyance and delivery; in other words, by the profit the Post Office obtains on the official correspondence. It is to be borne in mind, however, that official postage is, in nearly all cases, charged by weighing the letters not individually, but in the gross; a mode of procedure which, if applied to private correspondence, would reduce the rate of charge for such correspondence by about one-half; and although, owing to the greater average weight of official letters, the reduction of charge is not so great as one-half, it may be doubted whether the remaining charge be sufficient to leave any profit to the Post Office, so that whether the amount received and the cost incurred for the conveyance and delivery of official correspondence be, or be not included in the calculation, the net revenue of the Post Office could be but very slightly affected. It may be added that the postage charged against the various Government departments is actually paid into the coffers of the Post Office, and is not merely a statistical record.

(*b.*) The proceeds of the impressed stamp on newspapers is an item regarding which the claim of the Post Office to include it in the receipts is sufficiently established by reference to the fact, that, though this part of the revenue is collected by

* Eighth Report of Postmaster-General, p. 31.

another department, the sole purpose for which the stamp is now resorted to is to obtain for the newspaper the advantage of postal transmission. At the same time, it may be added, that the proceeds in question, amounting for the year 1861, to 134,571*l.*,* are by no means a remuneration for the service performed. Divided by the number of such newspapers conveyed, (viz. about 41 millions) † this amount gives only four-fifths of a penny per paper ; so that, as newspapers weigh on the average 2½ ozs. each,‡ the rate of charge for a newspaper is less than one-seventh of that for a letter of the same weight.

An argument in favour of the sufficiency, and even more than sufficiency, of the postage on newspapers to defray their postal expense, has been drawn from the fact that the railway companies actually convey them at a lower rate. But two important circumstances have to be borne in mind, 1st, that railway companies, instead of delivering the newspapers individually, merely hand them in bulk to the newspaper agents ; and 2ndly, that the companies make little or no provision for conveyance to villages and hamlets, thus performing only the least expensive portion of the service, and leaving the more costly work to the Post Office.

After what has been said, it must be obvious, that even when newspapers are prepaid with a postage stamp, (the charge being thereby raised to a penny for each transmission §) the payment is too low to be remunerative. Moreover, the privilege accorded to newspapers indirectly forces another loss on the department, since the difficulty of discriminating between newspapers and other printed matter has, in fact, compelled a reduction of the book postage to the same rate. So that, whereas formerly no book-parcel was carried for less

* Eighth Report of the Postmaster-General, p. 20.

† The number of free newspapers delivered in the United Kingdom, in 1861, was about 45,700,000.—*Vide* Eighth Report of Postmaster-General, p. 28.—But of these about 4½ millions were newspapers from abroad.

‡ Seventh Report of Postmaster-General, p. 12.

§ It is true that some few newspapers exceed the limit of weight (4 ozs.) which is carried for one penny, and they are therefore charged higher rates, but on the other hand two or more of the lighter newspapers—the aggregate weight of which does not exceed the 4 ozs.--are frequently sent under the same cover, and only one penny is charged on the packet. The average postage of each newspaper, when prepaid with the postage stamp, will therefore, in all probability, not exceed one penny per transmission.

than sixpence, the charge on light book-parcels is now as low as a penny. Instead, therefore, of any part of the receipts from newspapers being withheld from the Post Office, as it is alleged ought to be done, an equitable adjustment would have the effect of placing to the credit of the department something additional for the unprofitable service thus thrown upon it.

Under the head of expenditure, the only material item regarding which a difference of view prevails, is the expense of the packet service, which expense, it is maintained by some, should be charged to the Post Office.

The claim that the Post Office should be charged with the *whole* expense must be considered as barred by the simple fact, that few of the mail-packets were established either by the Post Office, or for merely postal purposes, their expense being far beyond what such requirements could justify. "To assume that those packets were really established for Post-Office purposes is to charge the Government with the most absurd extravagance. The West India packets, for instance, were established at a cost of 240,000*l.* per annum, though the utmost return that was expected from letters was 40,000*l.*, leaving the 200,000*l.* a clear deficit.

"Nor is this comparative uselessness for Post-Office purposes confined to the packets to remote places; the great cost, even of the home packets, results from causes independent of the Post Office."*

Indeed, as was stated in the House of Lords by Lord Monteagle, who, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, arranged the first contracts for the mail steamers, "the expense of the packet service, which was said to swallow up the whole of the revenue now derived from the Post Office, had no more to do with the Penny Postage than the expense of the war in Affghanistan or China. It was as distinct from the Post Office as the expense of the army or navy. The great packet communication between Great Britain and the Briisth North American Colonies was undertaken upon much higher principles than any connected with mere consideration of revenue. It was felt by the Government of Lord Melbourne that it was not wise to allow the only rapid mode of communication

* Report of Select Committee on Postage (1843), Mr. R. Hill's evidence, p. 46.

between the British possessions in North America and the mother country to be dependent upon the means afforded by the United States. Means were accordingly taken to establish a line of communication of our own. He admitted that this was not done, except at a very heavy expense; but it was not right to place that expense to the account of the Post Office."*

Still, it is obvious, that, as these packets do postal work, some portion of their expense ought to be charged to the Post Office, and the question of *amount* is what has really to be determined.

Upon this question it is necessary to explain, that, upon a suggestion from the Treasury, viz., that the amount should be 'measured in each case by the amount of ocean postage received,'† the following is the rule observed:—

Whenever the amount of ocean postage is below the cost of the line of packets by which the service is performed, the Post Office debits itself, for packet service, with a charge just equal to the ocean postage received. In the only two lines of packets, (viz., those between England and France, and England and Belgium,) in which the ocean postage exceeds the cost, the department debits itself with the whole expense of the packet service.

Whatever may be thought of this arrangement, it will scarcely be maintained that it is too favourable to the Post Office, which, save in respect of the two packet services just mentioned, (which now jointly yield a surplus of about 56,000*l.* per annum), is debited with an amount equal to its whole receipts, (viz., 470,000*l.*), without even any allowance for the expense it incurs in that portion of the packet administration which is necessarily carried on within the department.

The 8th Annual Report of the Postmaster-General ‡ contains an estimate of the net revenue of the Post Office for the year 1861, prepared on the principles laid down in the foregoing remarks, but including some less important adjustments shown in the document itself.

The net revenue thus determined is 1,161,985*l.*, the whole,

* Hansard—Debate in Lords, June 21, 1842.

† Letter to Postmaster-General, 10th January, 1860.

‡ Pp. 20–22.

save the 56,000*l.* mentioned above, and about 30,000*l.* derived from money-order transactions, being the produce of inland postage, which thus yields a net revenue of about 1,076,000*l.*

Second. I now proceed to consider the question of net revenue as to its *comparative* amount, when contrasted with the net revenue obtained before the establishent of Penny Postage, the object being to ascertain the loss consequent on the reduction of the rate. When proposing Penny Postage, I estimated this loss (under different circumstances, however) at about 300,000*l.**

The amount of net revenue in the year 1838, the last year throughout which the old rates were maintained, was, according to the mode of account then in use, 1,659,510*l.*† For the purpose of comparison, it is obvious that a similar mode of account must be applied to the present state of things.

Bearing this in mind, we have now once more to consider the two points affecting receipt, viz., the postage of the Government correspondence, and the proceeds of the impressed stamps on newspapers, and the one point affecting expenditure, viz., the expense of the packet service.

As regards the Government correspondence.

It is alleged that, under the old system, this was carried free. Now the fact is, that under that system the departments of probably the largest correspondence: viz., the Customs, the Excise, and the Stamps and Taxes, paid the postage of all their letters, while some other departments, though less strictly dealt with, paid at least for their foreign correspondence. The aggregate of such payments amounted, on the average, to about 45,000*l.* per annum.‡'

Now, seeing that, since the adoption of Penny Postage, the non-official correspondence has increased nearly eight-fold, it [illegible] be doubted whether, had the old system continued, the official correspondence would not have so increased as to raise the expenditure from 45,000*l.* per annum to at least equality with the 110,000*l.*, the present average.§

* Second Report of Select Committee on Postage (1843), question 11,070.

† Eighth Report of Postmaster-General, p. 31.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ The 45,000*l.* and 110,000*l.* charged for Government postage (exclusive of that of the Post Office itself) for the year 1838 and the present time, do

As regards Newspapers.

As, under the old system, the proceeds of the impressed stamp did not enter into the accounts of the Post Office, so, for the purpose of comparison, they must be excluded now; the only question, therefore, is, whether the Post Office should now be credited with the revenue derived from the adhesive stamp as applied to newspapers. This claim has been contested on the ground that, as under the old system newspapers were carried free, so the same service should be reckoned as performed now on the same terms; and it has been naturally supposed that the effect of recent changes has been to reduce the number of newspapers transmitted under the impressed stamp, the decrease being counterbalanced by the use of the adhesive stamp for which, therefore, in the comparison, no claim should be made.

Now, the fact is that, notwithstanding the option now given, the number of newspapers freed by the impressed stamp at the present time is not only as great as the number so conveyed in 1838, but is even somewhat larger; whilst a considerable increase has also taken place in the weight and bulk of the individual papers; so that the amount of gratuitous service, instead of being diminished, has been largely increased, and consequently, the sum derived from the adhesive stamp is, to say the least, a mere payment for additional duty.

Again, it is a mistake to suppose, that, under the old system, the conveyance of newspapers was altogether free. In fact, there were numerous and important exceptions, since the impressed stamp, to which all newspapers were then subjected, freed the paper only when transmitted from one post-town to another; moreover, in nearly every town there were extensive districts beyond the free-delivery, in which not only letters, but newspapers, were subjected to an additional charge. From this charge both are now relieved. Again, in addition to the towns that were then post-towns,

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not show the whole amounts received, the charges on the official foreign correspondence being omitted from the first amount, and that for the official bye and cross post letters from both. In the Second Report of the Select Committee on Postage (Appendix, p. 115), is a table showing with greater accuracy the amounts received for postage on the official *inland* correspondence for each year from 1833 to 1837. The amounts given above, however, will suffice for comparison.

there are at present more than 10,000 places having sub-offices. Before the introduction of Penny Postage, a newspaper transmitted by post between a post-town and, with few exceptions, any of the 10,000 places which have now sub-offices, was subjected to a charge of at least one penny: and when transmitted between any two of the above 10,000 places, with but few exceptions, to a charge of at least twopence.

At present, a newspaper, even without the impressed stamp, if posted at any one of the 11,400 places at which head or sub-post offices are now established, provided only that it does not exceed 4 ozs. in weight, is delivered at any other for a single penny.

No doubt, the number of newspapers directly charged with postage is larger now than under the old system; but as the charge is far from being remunerative, this is anything but a gain to the department.

As regards the expense of the Packet Service.

For the year 1838, the last year, as has been said, throughout which the old rates were maintained, the Post Office accounts, excepting a trifling amount of arrears, contain no charge for packet service, that service having been transferred from the Post Office to the Admiralty, partly in 1823, and the remainder in 1837,* so that, for the purpose of comparison, such charge must of course be excluded from the present account.

In the Postmaster-General's Report for 1861 is a table (p. 31) prepared with a view to a comparison such as that now under consideration. It is proper to state, however, that a certain change of circumstances has led to a corresponding change in the mode of presenting the account. Formerly, when the year's disbursements were almost identical with its liabilities, their unmodified appearance in the account was sufficient for practical purposes; but, of late years, when, owing to unavoidable irregularities in the large payments made to railway companies, the disbursements and liabilities have often been largely at variance, the latter have been presented in the account in preference to the former, as obviously affording better means for determining the net revenue of the year.

* Report of Select Committee of Lords (1847), question 352.

The amount arrived at by this mode of proceeding is 1,525,311*l.*, or 134,199*l.* less than the net revenue of 1838.

It may, perhaps, be objected to the above comparison, that the revenue derived from the packets is greater now than heretofore, and that equity requires a corresponding adjustment of the account. There can be no doubt that the revenue in question has considerably increased, although such increase is not wholly attributable to the improvements in the packe service. If, however, the adjustment thus called for should be made, equity would require corresponding adjustments on other points. Thus, allowance would have to be made, 1st, for a considerable amount of net revenue formerly accruing from various colonial post offices, as, for instance, those of British North America and the West Indies, which have recently been made independent. 2nd, for the great increase in the expense of conveying the mails, which increase, contrary to all that might have been expected, has arisen from the establishment and extension of the railway system. And, 3rd, for the additional expenditure caused by a general increase of salary and by a reduction of individual labour, both made to remedy admitted evils under the old system. It would, indeed, be very difficult, if not wholly impracticable, now to ascertain the result of all these adjustments; but it may safely be maintained, that it would leave the account at least as favourable to the Post Office as at present.

ROWLAND HILL.

December 18, 1862.

APPENDIX J. (p. 279.)

Conveyance of Mails by Railway. Memorandum thereon.

As doubts appear to exist as to the expediency of proceeding with the proposed Railway Bill, at least in the present comprehensive form, I have been induced to consider whether the object in view may not be attained by other means; and I am inclined to think that this may be done not only without the opposition, but even with the cordial co-operation of the railway companies; and that, concurrent with this, an important saving of revenue may be effected.

The means which I would suggest are that the Exchequer Loan Commissioners be authorised and required to advance loans, within certain limits, to such railway companies as can give ample security on the following conditions:—

1st. The amount of loan in each case to be proportionate to the postal service performed by the company. If thought necessary it might also be limited to a certain percentage on the sum which the company is legally empowered to borrow.

2nd. The rate of interest to be the market rate at the time as determined by the terms on which the Government may actually raise the necessary loan. At the present time this would probably be about three and a quarter per cent.

3rd. The company to engage to carry the mails according to a fixed tariff of rates to be framed beforehand by the Post Office. Such tariff to include all possible varieties of service, whether by trains "under notice," or otherwise; and the rates to be

calculated so as, under ordinary circumstances, to afford the companies a small profit.

4th. All the existing powers of the Postmaster-General to be maintained, and some additional powers to be secured: *e.g.*, the right to demand trains exclusively devoted to the mail service. The right to levy certain fines for irregularity on condition of paying certain premiums for punctuality. The right to erect the apparatus for the exchange of bags.

5th. The engagement to be for three years certain, terminable afterwards by either party on twelve months' notice.

The following table exhibits the amount of debentures issued by the several companies enumerated, and the average rates of interest on such debentures, as shown by the last published accounts.* It also exhibits the sum which each company would save if the *whole* of their loans were raised at three and a quarter per cent., and the amount, according to the latest award, payable by the Post Office for postal service. A comparison of the two last items shows that if the Government advanced the whole of the loans, the companies in question would be considerable gainers, even though they carried the mails for nothing. Such an arrangement, however, is not contemplated, and the comparison is made merely with a view of showing the capabilities of the plan.

The companies have been selected, not with a view of exhibiting the results in a favourable light, but simply because they have a large postal service.

* "Railway Intelligence for the Period," ending 31st December, 1856. Published "under the Sanction of the Committee of the Stock Exchange."

Railway Company.	Total amount of Debenture Loans.	Average rate of Interest.	Saving of the Companies by paying only $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.	Amount annually payable by the Post Office for Conveyance of the Mails under the latest awards or agreements.
	£	Per Cent.	£	£
Caledonian . .	2,262,426	4·5	28,280	23,710
Great Western .	10,083,710	4·57	133,104	18,252
London and North-Western . .	10,975,589	4·3	115,243	56,500
London and South-Western . .	2,400,416	4·31	25,444	14,780
Midland . . .	4,151,556	4·28	42,761	23,412
North-Eastern .	6,833,642	4·36	75,853	34,380
South-Eastern . .	2,709,468	4·61	36,848	14,624

The annual payments for the railway postal service amount to about 400,000*l.* The general adoption of the above plan would (the service remaining the same) reduce this amount probably to about 150,000*l.* To obtain the concurrence of the companies it would be necessary, probably, for the Government to advance gradually, as the existing bonds fall due, about 30,000,000*l.* in the aggregate, or rather less than two-fifths of the present amount of railway debentures. This advance, taking the saving of the companies at only one per cent. on the average, would reduce their expenses by 300,000*l.* And as their receipts from the Post Office would be reduced, say by 250,000*l.*, the balance would give a direct gain to the companies of 50,000*l.* per annum. But I am assured by gentlemen well informed on the subject, that the companies would also be benefited indirectly as regards the terms on which they would be enabled to raise the remainder of their loans.

The question naturally arises, why, seeing that a larger advance (say of 45,000,000*l.* instead of 30,000,000*l*). would probably suffice to relieve the Post Office of *all* payments for railway service, I have not proposed the larger amount? The reason is that I have not felt justified in asking Government

to do more than is necessary to supply the defects of early legislation, by placing the Post Office in a position similar to that in which it would probably have stood, had its interests (and through it those of the public) received due attention from the legislature when railways were first established. It is unnecessary to add that should Government feel disposed to extend the advances to railways beyond the limit I have proposed, the saving which would result from such extension might go to the further relief of the Post Office, or be carried direct to the credit of the general revenue of the state, as Government might determine. In arriving at this conclusion, I have not overlooked the importance of neutralising the unwillingness sometimes manifested by the companies now under agreement with the Post Office, to afford additional service without additional pay. Against this inconvenience I consider the Post Office may be tolerably well secured by making the agreement terminable by the Government, wthout notice, in the event of the conditions not being fully performed by the company.

I may add that advances, such as those now suggested (except that they were unfortunately unaccompanied by any stipulations as to the postal service), have already been made to several of the Irish railway companies.

Should the above plan be adopted by Government, I have little doubt that almost every railway company would speedily avail itself of the advantages it affords; and, if so, while both parties would be saved the trouble, expense, delay, and uncertainty of arbitrations, the Postmaster-General would be enabled, more effectually even than by the proposed bill, to grant many important postal facilities earnestly desired by the public, which he is now obliged to withhold, a most acceptable boon would be conferred on the railway companies, and a large saving—estimated above at 250,000*l.* a year—would be effected in the Post Office expenditure.

R. H.

6th January, 1857.

APPENDIX K. (p. 301.)

Letter to Lord Canning, Governor-General of India.

October 24th, 1857.

DEAR LORD CANNING,

I HOPE it may do some little to relieve your Lordship's anxiety to learn that Government has adopted a plan of mine for giving to Calcutta and Madras four mails a month, to and from England, instead of two.

The plan is fully described in the enclosed copy of a minute; but, to save you the trouble of reference, I beg to say that the principle of the measure is as follows:—Leaving the Calcutta, Madras, and China mails, whether *viâ* Southampton or Marseilles, unaltered, I despatch the Bombay mail from hence, *viâ* Marseilles, about a week (a quarter of a month) after the despatch of the Calcutta mail by that route; and arrange the despatch from Bombay of the return mail, so that it may reach London, *viâ* Marseilles, also about a week after the arrival of the Calcutta mail by that route.

Under this arrangement, the despatch across the peninsula, between Calcutta and Bombay, being fitted, in each direction, to the Bombay line of packets, will afford to Calcutta two good mails, each way, per month, *viâ* Bombay, in addition to the two per month she now has by her own packets; and, as to cross the peninsula requires about a week, the arrivals, as well as the departures, will be at nearly equal intervals, *i.e.*, one per week, or rather quarter of a month.

Madras will enjoy a similar advantage

Bombay will not benefit by the change (except by electric telegraph to and from Madras). On the contrary, she will be somewhat injured in respect of her *slow* mails, which must

be conveyed between Southampton and Malta or Alexandria, by the Calcutta, or by the Australian packets, whichever will serve best, there to await the arrival of the Bombay packets; but, as the payment of an additional postage of threepence will not only avoid this delay, but will save several days, as compared with the existing state of things, I attach little importance to the objection.

As the plan involves comparatively little additional service, the Peninsula and Oriental Company have undertaken it for a further payment of 16,000*l.* a year. I cannot, as yet, say when the change will be made.

I beg your Lordship will not think of replying to this letter. If the plan prove acceptable to you, a word to that effect from your private secretary will be welcome, more especially if he can add that your health, and that of Lady Canning,—to whom I beg to be most respectfully remembered—have not greatly suffered from the terrible anxieties to which you must have been exposed.

Under the trying circumstances to which I have alluded, I venture to think that your Lordship will not consider it obtrusive if I assure you that you have the earnest sympathy of every one at the Post Office—of every one at least who had the honour of knowing you—a sympathy accompanied, however, by the most entire conviction that under your able and energetic administration all that is possible to restore order and to prevent future outbreak will be accomplished.

In our small way we have done our best to expedite the arrival of the Indian mails. The last was conveyed from Paris to London, *viâ* Boulogne and Folkestone, all circumstances being favourable, in eight and a half hours.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

The Right Hon.
VISCOUNT CANNING.
&c. &c. &c

APPENDIX L. (p. 304.)

Minute relative to Panama Route to Australia.

The Postmaster-General.

1. In my minute of the 15th instant, on the subject of the Treasury Minute of the 11th (referred to your Lordship for report), I recommended that the consideration of that part of the Treasury Minute which relates to an additional postal service to Australia, by way of Panama, should be postponed, in order to admit of the immediate call for tenders for the continuance of the service by way of Suez.

2. Your Lordship and the Treasury having been pleased to adopt this recommendation, and the advertisements for tenders for the latter service having been issued, I now beg to submit my views on the proposed additional monthly service by way of Panama.

3. The question is divisible under two heads—

1st. Whether it is necessary that the postal communication with Australia should be more frequent than at present, viz., once a month? and

2nd. If so, is the Panama route the best for the additional mails?

4. As regards the first of these questions, I need not remind your Lordship that the sea postage of all the correspondence with the Australian colonies, including New Zealand, falls very far short of the cost of even a single line of packets. Such cost under the late contract having been 185,000*l.* a year, while the total sea postage cannot be estimated at more than about 50,000*l.* a year.

5. Having regard to the enormous additional loss which would result from the establishment of a second line of packets, and bearing in mind that the dissatisfaction so strongly felt, both here and in Australia, is not as to the infrequency of communication so much as to its irregularity, I am of opinion that the wishes of the public, whether at home or in the colonies, would be more effectually met by doing all that is practicable to improve the existing monthly service, than by doubling the frequency of communication.

6. As regards the second question, viz., as to the best route for the additional line of packets (should Government decide to establish one), the points for consideration appear to be mainly as to the ports to which the distances shall be reckoned, and the comparative length of route.

7. The advocates of the Panama route generally select Sydney as the right port; but this is manifestly unfair, inasmuch as, while by the Panama route it is the nearest of the continental Australian ports, by the Suez route it is the most distant. Neither can this port claim preference by amount of correspondence, since the enclosed statement of the correspondence between this country and the several Australian colonies, including New Zealand, shows that that of New South Wales is only 23 per cent. of the whole, while that of Victoria is as much as 58 per cent. The latter colony is also centrally situated, having Tasmania on the south, South Australia and Western Australia on the west, and New South Wales and New Zealand on the east. It is clear, therefore, that Melbourne is the port to which the distances should be reckoned.

8. It will, of course, be for the Admiralty to state exactly the comparative lengths of the two routes; but, from the best information I have been able to obtain, it appears that the distance to Melbourne is less by way of Gibraltar and Suez than by way of Panama, to the extent of about 1500 nautical miles, making a difference, according to the average speed of the packets, of at least six days in favour of the Suez route.

9. Though the contrary has often been assumed, even Sydney is nearer by the Suez route than by the Panama route, and that to the extent of about 300 nautical miles; so that the only colony which would be brought nearer by the

adoption of the Panama route is New Zealand, whose correspondence, however, amounts to only six per cent. of the whole.

10. The comparative absence of storms in the Pacific may, to some extent, counterbalance greater distance, but not, I presume, so far as to leave any doubt that the communication *viâ* Suez will remain the quickest—to Melbourne at least. This, however, is a point on which, no doubt, the Admiralty will report.

11. But, by the foregoing statement, the superiority of the Suez route is by no means fully shown, since, as respects the mails sent through France, the time is further shortened by four days and a half*: while the Panama route admits of no such acceleration.

The real advantage, therefore, of the Suez route, when speed is important, cannot be estimated, as regards Melbourne, at less than ten days. And as the saving, *viâ* France, of course extends to all the Australian colonies, it may be doubted whether even New Zealand would be materially benefited by adopting the Panama route.

12. Again, by a slight sacrifice of time (not more, probably, than one or two days) the Suez route might be made to take in either Point de Galle or the Mauritius; thus in either case affording important postal facilities, not only to the colony so included, but also to this country and to the Australian colonies in their correspondence therewith. The Panama route affords no similar facilities.

13. But the Suez route has also an important pecuniary advantage over that by Panama. Our mails are conveyed across the Isthmus of Suez by the Egyptian government, for a fixed annual payment, which amounts to not more than fourpence per pound weight; whereas the charge by the railway company for crossing the Isthmus of Panama is elevenpence per pound, in addition to which we have to pay the local government the exorbitant rate of one shilling an ounce for letters for the mere privilege of passing through their territory. These charges would add, say twopence, to the postage of each newspaper, and sixpence to the postage of each half-ounce letter. Or, should the quarter-ounce scale be applied, then threepence for each quarter-ounce letter,

* Now (1868) 6½ days.

making a total charge of ninepence; so that there coul be no cheap mail by this route, the letters *viâ* Panama being all charged as highly as those sent through France.

14. There is still another circumstance which should not be overlooked in a comparison between the two routes—at both ends of the Suez route the electric telegraph is being rapidly extended. It already reaches from England to Malta; and, even if not yet completed, is in rapid progress from Sydney *viâ* Melbourne to Adelaide. Already, therefore, as regards the transmission of news, the distance to and from Sydney by this route is reduced by one-fourth: and, supposing that at any future time the telegraph should be extended on the one side to Point de Galle, and on the other to King George's Sound (neither, perhaps, an improbable event), that distance would be so greatly reduced that Sydney would be brought (by telegraph) within fifteen days of London.

15. The Panama route, as yet, possesses no similar advantage; and even if the difficulties of crossing the Atlantic be mastered, and the telegraph extended to Panama, there will yet remain the whole time occupied in crossing the Pacific—probably more than thirty days.

16. These several considerations appear to be conclusive as to the decided superiority of the route by Suez over that by Panama; and consequently, even if a monthly service be deemed insufficient, the additional packets should be placed on the Suez route.

17. Should similar views be adopted in the Australian colonies—as I expect they will when the facts of the case are understood—the several governments, excepting that of New Zealand, and perhaps that of New South Wales, will probably decline to provide their share of the cost of any service which may be attempted by way of Panama. It is very important, therefore, that, as indicated in the Treasury Minute, the concurrence of the colonies should be ascertained before any tender is finally accepted.

18. But if, as fairness seems to require, it be made a condition of the tender that the total time from London to Melbourne, *viâ* Panama, shall not exceed that which may be allowed *viâ* France and Suez, then it may be doubted if any responsible parties will be found to undertake the contract.

19. In another minute, when submitting a letter from the Treasury on the subject of postal communication with British Columbia, I propose to consider the question (raised in that letter) as to the best mode of conducting the service on this side the Isthmus of Panama; but, as the effect on the Australian service would be much the same whether one of the two monthly lines now existing be employed (and that service is so direct that little would, I presume, be gained by adopting another route), or whether a new and independent service be established, I do not consider it necessary to trouble your Lordship on this point at present.

20. Should your Lordship concur in these views, I would suggest that a copy of this minute, accompanied by a letter from yourself, expressive of such concurrence, be forwarded to the Treasury.

(Signed) R. H.

27th September, 1858.

Approved.

(Signed) C.

29th September, 1858.

APPENDIX M. (p. 349.)

Proposed Reduction in the Postage on Newspapers and other Printed Matter.

Of the importance of distributing our cheap and excellent newspapers and other periodicals and serials over the whole face of the country there can be but one opinion amongst enlightened men. The aim of this memorandum is to show to what extent, and by what means, this great end can be attained, without undue sacrifice of other equally great interests.

With respect to the allegations made as to the cheaper conveyance of such matter in other countries, it is important to remark that no argument can be safely drawn from them, even when they are found literally correct, without careful examination into all the appertaining circumstances.*

And here it may be observed, that forty years ago our own journals, though laden with heavy duties, viz., the stamp duty and those on advertisements and paper, were constantly

* This caveat is abundantly justified by information published in the 'Journal of the Society of Arts' (October 28th, 1870), by which it appears that in North Germany, one of the countries pointed to for our example, newspapers are subject to a regular stamp duty, such as was formerly paid in England, but the amount of which is not easily stated, since it depends upon the size of the paper and other circumstances; and, further, that the compulsory stamp has not the franking power it possessed here, so that the postage constitutes an additional charge; and it is with the sum of these two charges that our postage should in fairness be compared. But the postage alone ($\frac{2}{5}d.$ for rather less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz., with a proportionate increase for greater weights) is higher than that which was charged in this country on many papers of large circulation, *e.g.*, the 'Times' (with its supplement of four pages, or, under the impressed stamp, with its supplement of eight pages), the 'Spectator,' the 'Economist,' and the 'Athenæum.' While, besides exemption from stamp duty, other important advantages were enjoyed by the British, as compared with the North German papers, *e.g.*, under the adhesive stamp, permission to write upon them anything except a letter, and, with the like exception, to enclose with them either

spoken of as carried free. An anomaly the more remarkable because if addressed anywhere beyond the narrow limits of what was termed the "free delivery," every newspaper bore a postal charge. It scarcely need be said that to the freedom of those earlier days, no one, least of all the applicants in this case, would wish to return.*

It must, therefore, be inquired as respects the countries referred to.

1st. Whether the postage be in addition to a stamp duty.

2nd. Whether the post office undertakes house-to-house delivery, and that free of charge.

3rd. What are the restrictions as to weight, as to writing or other marks, and as to time and place of posting. Whether, in short, the cheap transmission be not made under regulations which would not be tolerated here.

4th. Whether the governments concerned have not either the free use of the railways for the conveyance of mails, or at least their use on very much lower terms than are conceded here.

5th. Whether lowness of postage on printed matter be not obtained at the cost of high postage on letters.

6th. What in the countries referred to is the fiscal result

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one or more additional newspapers or other printed or written matter, on paying book postage according to the total weight; or again, under the impressed stamp, the power of repeated retransmission. But, above all, the right to resort to other and cheaper means of conveyance, a right barred in North Germany by postal monopoly. In short, all things considered, there can scarcely be a doubt, that even before the reductions of 1870, our much depreciated newspaper arrangements were more favourable, alike to publishers and the public, than those of North Germany, which are held up as our example. Further, that the North German Post Office, instead of having to pay, like the British Post Office, 600,000*l.* a year for the railway conveyance of its mails, has the use of all railways without subjecting itself to any charge whatever, though its operations include parcels up to the individual weight of twenty pounds; lastly, that with all these advantages, and with a higher postage rate on the prevailing class of letters, the North German Post Office, though serving a population about equal to our own, yields in annual net revenue only about 60,000*l.*, while the British Post Office, with all its burdens and its lower rate of postage, yields, even if debited with the whole expense of the mail packet service, more than 1,400,000*l.* of course relieving taxpayers to that extent. *Vide* Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster-General—the latest issued—p. 14.

* Full information of this subject may be found in a minute of mine dated 13th July, 1858, and included in a Parliamentary Return, No. 302, 1860.

of the postal system; whether, as here, the production of a large net revenue (whose diminution would have to be made good by some other impost); whether, as in various other countries, a bare self-support, or, as in the United States, a deficiency to be supplied from the general taxation.

7th. Whether, in fine, there be not some circumstance, or set of circumstances, which vitiates the example.

It is at least highly probable that when the various examples held up have been subjected to the proposed scrutiny, their validity will shrink into very small dimensions.

Without, however, laying too much stress either way on foreign example, it is manifestly important to consider the present question in relation to other home interests; in recognising the claims of newspapers we must not forget those of letters; the less so as the former are already by far the more favoured class of the two, the allowance of weight of a newspaper being eightfold that in a letter. It must be borne in mind, therefore, that in case of any surplus in revenue, equality, if not priority of claim, whether for increased weight, increased facilities, or other advantage, may be fairly set up in favour of letters; further, that this claim is prodigiously strengthened by the fact that it is to letters alone (almost exclusively to home letters), that the Post Office is indebted for its net revenue.

Returning, however, for the moment to the separate question of newspapers, it must be remarked that any lowering of that unit of charge which has hitherto been strictly maintained is open to so many objections as to demand that the change, if made, should be made with extreme caution.

1st. The postal conveyance of printed matter, especially of newspapers, since these admit of no delay—is, even at the present rates, under existing circumstances unremunerative, a fact which becomes very intelligible when the eightfold allowance of weight is considered, and which of itself overthrows the expectation held out by some that the fiscal loss by reduction would be compensated by increase in the number of packets sent.

2nd. The proposed reduction, if made simply, would inevitably lead to increased demands on the part of the railway companies, and that upon two grounds, (*a*) augmented

weight of the mails, and (*b*) alleged interference with their parcel traffic. All this will be found to have followed the reduction to the present rates.

3rd. The temptation to use printed matter as a cover, or fraudulent substitute for written letters, which even now is unduly strong, would, without safeguards far beyond any yet known, be enormously strengthened.

4th. As the power of mechanically exchanging bags *en route* is, as mentioned by the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons, but limited, augmentation in weight may by rendering stoppage necessary, retard the progress of the mails.

Under the first of the above heads it must be added that the sound commercial principle on which the Post Office should be conducted—the full establishment of which was kept steadily in view, and towards which a nearer and nearer approach was made so long as I held the office of secretary—is that each part of the business should be at least self-supporting; every deviation from this principle not only producing direct injury to fiscal results but becoming prolific as an example. Further that deviation as respects printed matter is the more objectionable because, as the Post Office has there no monopoly of conveyance, the inevitable result is to saddle it with whatever has to be conveyed at a loss, while aught that is profitable is sure to pass into other hands.

In relation to the third head, that concerning temptation to fraud, it may be remarked that if the change can be so made as to render fraud under its operation impracticable, objection on this score will of course be removed; and, further, that if the modification necessary for securing this can be made at the same time to reduce labour at the Post Office as regards this special duty, ground for reduction in charge may be established.

Thus then we come to a consideration of means; and, first. it is assumed that the application under review relates only to the *primary* distribution of newspapers, &c., viz., that from the hands of the publishers or of the vendors, and it is for that alone that just provision seems practicable or is here attempted.

Now it is well known that such distribution in towns, as now performed by newsvendors themselves, is very

inexpensive, partly because the cost of railway conveyance is less to them than to the Post Office, partly because the delivery is generally performed by boys, but mainly because the newspapers are not individually addressed, each copy of a particular paper serving as well for one individual as for another. The first and perhaps only desideratum, therefore, is a means for performing the same duty, viz., the distribution of papers not individually addressed at small cost in the rural districts.

Now the need of individual addresses may be superseded in the country by use of the means found available in towns, in other words, if lists similar to those which doubtless guide the boys in the town delivery be put into the hands of the Post Office rural messengers, the latter will be able to perform the duty of distribution with as little difficulty as the former.

Supposing this plan to be adopted, it becomes practicable to save labour in the Post Office to a much greater extent than at first sight appears.

At present, newspapers posted for rural districts have to be assorted from a mass of papers for all parts of the United Kingdom, and, indeed, of the world. Such as are for a distance have to undergo a like operation at one or more offices on their way to that where, by a final assortment, they are arranged according to the walks of the several messengers. Lastly, of course, each paper has to be delivered according to its particular address.

Now upon the proposed plan, the publishers or the newsvendors of the metropolis or other centre, instead of folding, addressing, and posting the journals intended for the rural districts, would, as is now done to a great extent—naturally send them in bulk, in the parcels containing journals for the post towns; an arrangement which would relieve the Post Office, not only of the first assortment, but also of the duty of conveyance; thereby avoiding at once increased difficulty as to exchange of bags, and also interference or quasi interference, with parcel-traffic, unless in the acceptable way of augmentation; and the provincial newsvendors, on receiving these parcels, would, while themselves dealing with the journals intended for town-delivery, and for such of the rural districts as they might prefer to serve, convey the remainder, still unfolded and unaddressed to the local post office (which they

would have previously supplied with corresponding lists, variable, say once a month) to the local post office, thus superseding the intermediate assortments; and lastly, the postmasters would only have to arrange the journals, by number and kind, according to the rounds of the messengers; thus reducing the trouble of even the final assortment to a minimum.

Still further to lessen trouble to the Post Office, as likewise for just security, it would be well to require that payment for the month should be made in advance, viz., on delivery of the lists. It would also be necessary to rule that the sum to be so paid should in no case be below a certain amount.

And thus, by an actual reduction in Post Office labour unattended with any counterbalancing disadvantage, the desired reduction in postage would be warranted.

It is obvious that papers thus dealt with would present no temptation to fraud, since the absence of particular address would altogether prevent their being used as substitutes for letters.

On the plan set forth above, if taken as a whole, I think it would be safe and justifiable to reduce the charge for what I have called the primary distribution of newspapers, &c., to one halfpenny the four ounces, that is to say to one-half the present rate.

Security against fraud generally, it may be pointed out, would be immeasurably increased if the proposed boon were accompanied with the entire abolition of the impressed stamp, the use of which, besides maintaining a constant temptation to dishonesty, demands on the part of the Post Office and the public the observance of a highly complicated set of rules involving so much trouble that they are constantly violated with impunity.

This change, however, would have to be accompanied with the issue of a three-halfpenny adhesive stamp (a measure actually contemplated some years ago) to supply the place of the impressed stamp of the same value now used by newspapers which, like 'The Times' or 'Illustrated London News,' occasionally range in weight between four and six ounces. The use of the new stamp might very properly be extended to all other printed matter of like weight.

Before touching on further possibilities as respects news-

papers, I return to the subject of letters, in relation to which much additional improvement is desirable. This might be arranged under the following heads:—

(*a*) Increase in the number of deliveries; at least in the large towns.

(*b*) The extension of periodic (not necessarily daily) delivery to every house, however remote, as in France, Prussia, and Switzerland; an improvement important, not only to commercial interests and social intercourse, but to jurisprudence, legislation, and political action.

(*c*) The establishment on one or two of the great routes—say after trial for a short distance, of a mode of conveyance far more rapid than any yet employed, but delayed on account of its great expense, viz., tubular conveyance; by the use of which, in the opinion of the eminent engineers, Mr. C. H. Gregory and Mr. Edward Cowper (as set forth by them in a report to myself dated October, 1859), a speed of from 120 to 150 miles an hour might be attained, though only at a total annual cost (interest of capital inclusive) of about 800*l.* per mile, from which, however, there would be a set-off of probably about two-thirds for present expenses saved. The use of such conveyance so far as Crewe on the one hand and Dover on the other, would bring Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paris wholly within the reach of the London night mail, at the same time of course greatly lessening the effective distance to all places beyond. It would also for reasons not necessary to be stated here, both facilitate the frequent despatch of mails, and aid greatly in the prompt distribution of newspapers to places directly or indirectly served; would, for instance, make it practicable to place the London morning papers on the breakfast tables of Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester.

(*d.*) Increase in the standard of weight, say, from half an ounce to an ounce, a change which would reduce the postage of heavy letters by about a half, besides avoiding much weighing of letters and vexatious overcharge for excess of weight.

(*e.*) A reduced rate of postage, on certain conditions, for circulars. In most towns there is a time in every day at which the work in the post office is light, as also a delivery at which the amount of letters, &c., might be considerably increased without inconvenience, and circulars so posted as best to suit these opportunities, provided always they came in sufficient numbers and were taken to the head office, might reasonably be dealt with on lower terms, perhaps at half the present rate.

A plan in accordance with what is here set forth was drawn up by my son, Mr. Pearson Hill, and laid before the Secretary of the Post Office some time ago, but, as I understand, awaits decision. His plan is limited to local distribution, but, should it be adopted and prove successful, I should be ready to suggest means for giving it general effect.

Now beneficial concessions in the case both of letters and newspapers would be greatly facilitated by the establishment of more equitable and more equable arrangements than the present between the Post Office and the railway companies. Opportunity for this is likely soon to arise through inevitable demand for the extension to railway traffic of that abolition of tax on locomotion which is now imminent in respect of other modes of conveyance, a concession which may fairly be accompanied with the legal enactment of the tariff of charges, and other modifications in the laws affecting the Post Office proposed in paragraphs 23 and 24 of my Report on Railways, dated 7th May, 1867, which forms part of the Report of the Royal Commission on Railways laid before Parliament in the same year.

Perhaps also means may be devised for so much further improving the apparatus used in exchanging bags as to remove the present objection to increased weight.

Supposing these two important advantages to be secured, the Post Office would then be able without injustice to other interests, to receive the newspapers (of course still in bulk and unaddressed, though assorted according to districts and accompanied with respective lists) directly from the metropolitan or other central publishers or vendors, and to forward

them, without further intervention, to their ultimate destination; thus, in effect, reducing still further the charge for their distribution throughout the country.

As reduction in labour, not only to the Post Office but also to senders, will obviously attend every reduction in number of packets, perhaps two or more publishers or vendors may, under either of the above arrangements, send combined packets, lists, &c., a course which will not in any way impede or modify distribution.

The operation of the plans recommended in this paper would, I believe, open the way to additional advantages which it would now be premature to mention.

ROWLAND HILL.

June 12, 1869.

APPENDIX N. (p. 358.)

Lecture delivered by Mr. M. D. Hill, Q.C., at the Royal Institution, in the year 1862.

THE history of no other single institution would throw so much light on the progress of improvement throughout the world, as that of postal establishments, in their two great branches: the one which gives facility for travelling, and the other—in modern times far more important—which is charged with the transmission of correspondence, public and private. Indeed it is hardly too much to say that the amount of its correspondence will measure with some approach towards accuracy the height which a people has reached in true civilization. As when, for instance, we find that the town of Manchester equals in its number of letters the empire of all the Russias, both in Europe and in Asia, we obtain a means of estimating the relative degrees of British and Russian civilization, which will, it is true, require to be corrected by the application of other criteria, but which, nevertheless, will of itself supply us with a standard not far wide of the truth. On a little reflection this view, startling as it may appear at first sight, will cease to create surprise. For if we examine the constituents of genuine civilization, each will, I believe, be found to act its part in the augmentation of correspondence. And first, as to commerce. It will not be doubted that as commerce expands, letters receive a proportionate increase. So again, every advance in the diffusion of knowledge—whether by directly promoting education in all classes of the community, or by placing books and newspapers within the reach even of the poor—must be followed by a similar consequence. The progress of society tends to the dispersion of families, by freeing individuals from the many restraints which in the days of our forefathers made man, according to

Adam Smith, the most difficult of all commodities to remove from its place of growth: while on the other hand, genuine civilization knits together more and more closely the ties of family and of friendship, and thus greatly strengthens the desire for intercommunication among the separated.

When from the various causes which go to stimulate this desire, postal correspondence attains an amount which makes the Post-office a department of primary importance in a State, the attention of the public is gradually drawn to the necessity of so conducting postal affairs as to enhance and multiply all possible facilities for the interchange of letters, —first, by cheapening postage; next, by frequent despatches, by celerity of transit and promptitude of delivery; and again, by the employment of every practicable safeguard which may ensure security. Thus if the Post-office, while under all the imperfections incident to the early state of every institution, has by the operation of external causes had letters thrust upon it until it has been raised into importance in the State, it then begins, by reason of the improvements which I have indicated, most powerfully to assist from within towards the further development of correspondence. And when the course of improvement has carried it to a high pitch of excellence, offering in addition prospects of future advancement, it will itself be regarded as a monument of civilization, of which the country erecting it may be justly proud. Then again, extreme facilities for correspondence bring forth whole classes of letters which otherwise would never have come into existence. The experience of my hearers will suggest to them how societies for religious, literary, scientific, or philanthropic purposes have been founded of late years which the rate of postage formerly exacted would have rendered it impossible to organize, and how the correspondence thus created swells their letter-bags. And yet this is but a small class of letters as compared with many others which might be enumerated, the contributors to it being pretty much limited to the higher and middle orders of society. It is when we consider the operation of a good postal system on the affairs of the poor, that we shall find it most potent in stimulating correspondence, since in descending, the social pyramid so rapidly enlarges, that whatever increases the letters of the poor must have an effect far beyond any which

it is reasonable to attach to causes operating exclusively on those of the rich. Not until the epoch of Penny postage, however, had we in any practical sense a post-office for the poor. The minutes of evidence of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Postage, appointed in the session of 1837-8, are replete with proofs of this allegation. In one case a poor man remained unaware of the death of his relative for six or eight months, because neither family had been able to afford the cost of postage. Mr. Emery, Deputy-Lieutenant for Somersetshire, adduced instances in abundance which proved both the desire and the inability of the poor to correspond.

"A person [said he] in my parish had a letter from a grand-daughter in London, which she could not take up for want of means. She was a pauper receiving her allowance of half-a-crown a week. The post-office keeper, at her request, retained the letter for a time, in hopes of her being able to squeeze out the postage from her pittance, a task the woman found impossible. At last a lady gave her a shilling. But by this time the letter had been returned to London. She never had it! That led me [said Mr. Emery] to inquire further, and by going to the different offices in the neighbourhood (I went to almost every one of them within a circle of fourteen, fifteen, or twenty miles), I made inquiry into the effect of dear postage on the poor. The postmaster at Banwell said, 'My father kept the Post-office for many years. He is lately dead. He used to trust poor people very often with letters. They generally could not pay the whole charge. He told me, indeed I know, he lost many pounds by letting poor people have their letters. We sometimes return them to London, although we frequently keep them for weeks, and when we know the parties, let them have their letters, taking the chance of getting our money. One poor woman once offered my sister a silver spoon in pledge till she could raise the money. My sister did not take the spoon, and the woman came in a day or two with the postage and took up the letter. It came from her husband, who was in prison for debt; she had six children, and was very badly off.' At Congresbury, the postmaster said, 'The price of a letter is a great rax on poor people. I sent one charged eightpence to a labouring man about a week ago. It came from his daughter. He first

refused it, saying it would take a loaf of bread from his other children, but after hesitating a little time he paid the money.' The postmaster of Yatton said, 'I have had a letter waiting lately from the husband of a poor woman, who is at work in Wales. The charge was ninepence. It lay many days in consequence of her not being able to pay the postage. I at last trusted her with it.' "

Probably the memory of such of my hearers as took part in the business of life prior to the year 1840, will furnish them with instances of this hardship as falling within their own experience. I may mention one which occurred under my own eye. Being then in Parliament, I was asked by an aged woman for a frank to be addressed to her brother, who lived at Reading, the sister residing at Hampstead. She told me she had not seen him for thirty years, and that although they both could write, there had been no correspondence between them for that long period, their silence not arising from alienation or indifference, but simply from neither being able to bear the expense of postage, then amounting, from Reading to London, to sevenpence per letter. The suppression of correspondence produced by the dearness of postage had been a frequent subject of conversation in my family, and I was desirous to avail myself of every opportunity for estimating its extent. In giving her the frank, I therefore informed her that her brother's answer might be sent under cover to me, and if she wished to write again she might apply for another frank. Her letter was promptly answered, and a brisk correspondence between the two old relatives immediately sprang up. Sevenpence then constituted a barrier sufficient to preclude all communication between brother and sister (although living within forty miles of each other) for the space of thirty years!

Postal communication is, therefore, not only a subject of vast importance, but its history would be rich in varied and curious anecdote, and would be suggestive of most interesting inquiries. Why, for instance, has Asia, which would seem, prior to the reach of history, to have established in some of its various and mighty kingdoms a system of relays for carrying despatches, never developed that system into one for the interchange of private letters?

And this establishment of relays we may trace through

sacred and profane writers, ancient and modern, down to our own time. Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller, writing in the fourteenth century, pronounced a glowing eulogium on the ample provision for change of horses which he found in China at every stage, there being sometimes as many as three hundred stationed at one post. And yet, although the relays continue, they are now, as they ever have been, entirely confined to the transmission of despatches to and fro among the various ministers of the Government. Of late years it is true that private companies have instituted letter posts. Whether these have survived the recent disturbances I do not know. The accommodation afforded was but limited, and the postage was high; a letter carried a distance of seven hundred miles was charged five shillings and sixpence.

Doubtless the letter-writing and letter-reading public of Asia must, in ancient times, have been very small, as indeed it now is compared with that of Europe. Still paucity of correspondents has for ages been insufficient to account for the fact that in no part of that quarter of the globe has any provision ever been made for the transmission of private letters, except what is of recent date, and clearly the offspring of European settlement. Can any further explanation of the fact be offered than that it ranges itself under that general law which seems to arrest Asiatic progress whenever it has arrived at a certain point? That point reached, the stream would appear always to freeze; knowledge to become stationary, and improvement impossible. No such law stunts our growth in Europe, and yet an improvement apparently so slight and obvious as the addition of a letter-post to any system of intercommunication which furnished the means of cheap and rapid transmission, was a step never taken by the ancient world, either Greek or Roman. That Athens should have missed it is all but incredible. When the duties and interests of her headship in the naval affairs of Greece had covered the Ægean with swift vessels plying among its islands, and perpetually entering and departing from the ports which studded them, as they did the continental shores of Europe and Asia, how could it be that a postal system in some sort analogous to our own should not have sprung up? To be sure an epistle in those days was a somewhat cumbrous article,

being written on thin boards spread over with wax, so that the letter, when finished, if it ran to any length, would probably resemble piled slices of bread and butter. But although when even comparatively few, such letters might, in addition to the rider, overburden a horse, yet they could be a matter of no moment in a ship, however small. In Rome, we should have learnt from the letters of Cicero, even if no other sources of information had been open to us, that his countrymen had not the advantage of a Post-office; and although Augustus established relays of horses for the conveyance of despatches and of the officers of Government, which relays were gradually extended from the Euphrates to the shores of Gaul opposite to Britain, and although the prohibition of private persons to avail themselves (even upon adequate payment) of this accommodation for travelling was gradually relaxed, yet so far as I have been able to ascertain, no proof exists that the Roman postal system was ever applied to the transmission of private letters. The probabilities no doubt are, that individuals would avail themselves of such an obvious and desirable mode of transmission whenever opportunities were afforded them; but it would seem that never was provision made by the Government to supply this great want—a want extensively felt, as is evidenced by the large number of Roman letters, copies of which have been preserved to our own times.

My researches, however, have been far too slight and scanty to justify me in the conclusion that, because I myself have found no evidence to connect the postal establishments of the ancient world with the transmission of private letters, leisure, industry, and learning would be thrown away on such an inquiry; and I must confess my astonishment that while a multitude of topics, certainly of less moment, and (if I may judge) of much inferior interest, occupy a host of acute intellects, that of which I am taking a few hasty glimpses has attracted the attention of so small a number of students, and of each, as it would appear, for so short a time. I have not been able to find that even Germany has produced a single work which affects to furnish more than a sketch or outline of postal history.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, we may search the chronicles of Europe for ages without discovering any trace

of a postal system, even for despatches or for the conveyance of travellers. The first indication of a letter post is stated by German authors to have been found in the republic of the Hanse Towns, about the thirteenth century. Shortly afterwards it was adopted, as the same authorities inform us, by the Teutonic Knights, who, like him of the *Canterbury Tales*, made war on the infidel in Lithuania and the adjacent districts eastward. As regards the Hanse Towns, the statement appears to me to bear marks of trustworthiness; and it is not unlikely that a postal system, established in what might be called their neighbourhood, would be imitated by the Knights during their long terms of absence from their homes. The probabilities in favour of the priority claimed for the Hanse Towns seem to me to arise as follows. They were a federation of republics, each planted at a distance from the others; each therefore exposed to dangers which rendered sure and speedy intercommunication almost a necessity of their existence. But the Hanse Towns were also commercial cities, and the demand for an interchange of private letters would be almost equally urgent. Considering, then, that the merchants were the rulers, nothing can be more natural than that they would accommodate themselves and their fellow-traders by making the transmission of letters a prominent feature in their postal arrangements, in addition to the conveyance of travellers and of public despatches. Nor would they be the last to observe the fiscal advantages derivable from letter-postage, whether it merely diminished the cost of the establishment, or became so large as to yield a balance of profit.

We next trace a line of posts in the Tyrol, laid down in the reign of the Emperor Maximilian, who naturally desired to connect Lombardy with his Austrian dominions. The merit of this project is given by historians to the Lombard princes of the house of Thurn and Taxis, as they were designated after their removal to Germany. Under the Emperor Charles V., they established a line from Vienna to Brussels, thus connecting the Empire with its outlying possessions in Flanders. These were both lines of letter posts; and after their institution, the advantages of a Post-office, and the method of administering it, could be no secret throughout Europe. Yet until the reign of Henry VIII., I have found nothing to show that England had taken even the preliminary

step of an official establishment of Post-horses for travelling and for despatches. Letters were conveyed by special messengers, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback; and again by carriers, who, as we learn from Shakspeare, had no relays, the same horse either carrying its pack or drawing its cart from day to day. Correspondence could hardly be expected to flourish when obstructed by so many impediments to safe and quick transmission.

If the historian of the British Post-office, whenever he shall arise, should desire to introduce his narrative by showing the state of things prior to its establishment, he will be embarrassed in his choice of facts by the multitude which will press themselves upon his attention, each clearly illustrating the difficulties our ancestors encountered in the pursuit of such knowledge as was to be sought through correspondence. But I must resist the attractions of the subject, and hurry forwards. How far England was behind some other nations in very important social arrangements, is indicated by the circumstance that long before we had a post for inland letters, the foreign merchants resident here enjoyed a stated interchange of correspondence with the Continent. This undertaking had its origin during the reign of Henry VIII., or perhaps even prior to its commencement. In that of James I., on complaint by the English merchants that the foreign postmaster delayed their letters, the king took the appointment into his own hands.

It might be fairly presumed, even in the absence of direct evidence, that the post-boy who carried despatches, or accompanied the traveller during a stage of his journey to take back the post-horse, would be induced now and then to carry a private letter, and that in the course of years a usage profitable to all parties would grow up, which would engraft a letter-post (of a rude kind, perhaps) on a system which the law intended only for despatches and for travellers. The hypothesis is confirmed by history, and the practice to which I have referred eventually became so extensive as to attract the attention of the Government. The years 1635 and 1637 witnessed the issue by Charles I. of his famous proclamations, establishing our Post-office on its present foundation, and directing that it should extend to Scotland and Ireland. The merit of this enterprise would seem to belong to Thomas

Witherings, who was appointed first Inland Postmaster-General, he being already one of the masters of the foreign post. The loss, however, on the undertaking was for those days considerable, amounting to 3400*l.* per annum. Yet the lines of communication were but few, and the despatches of letters followed each other at long intervals. Soon afterwards the ever-memorable conflicts of that unhappy reign broke out. The proclamations had claimed for the Crown a right of monopoly. It will create no surprise to learn that this prerogative was questioned by Parliament, nor that when the Houses became paramount over the King, they confirmed the monopoly (transferring it, however, to themselves), and that they closed a rival Post-office which, after Parliament had contested the King's right, had been set on foot by the City of London, with some advantage to the public from the effect of competition. As the controversy between the Parliament and the City (no such unequal combatants in those days as they would be in our own) would call for legal knowledge on the part of the Postmaster-General, his office was united to that of Attorney-General, in the person of Mr. Prideaux. Of this gentleman's proceedings not very much is known; but he claimed, probably with justice, the merit of having so improved and expanded the system as to make it not only self-supporting, but even to yield a profit. Taught by the success of the City enterprise, he lowered the rates of postage, and increased the frequency of despatches, thus evincing that he not only apprehended but acted upon principles which, although they have ever since received lip-homage, have too often been disregarded in practice, official men preferring immediate petty gain to large profits in the not distant future. Thus, in the early part of the last century, a request having been made from Warwick that the London letters should be sent direct to that town instead of through Coventry, by which latter route much time was lost, the Postmasters-General refused the concession; and their reason, given probably to the Lords of the Treasury, is thus recorded:—'From London through Coventry to Warwick is more than eighty miles, so that we can charge threepence per letter going that way; whereas we can only charge two pence per letter if they went direct.' But they add, 'perhaps we may get more letters at the cheaper rate.' It is possible that the

difficulty lay not with the Post-office, but with the Treasury, as we find that the same Postmasters-General upon another occasion applied for authority to improve the circulation and lower the rates of postage in a particular district, stating 'we have indeed found by experience that where we have made the correspondence more easie and cheape the number of letters has been thereby much increased, and therefore do believe such a settlement may be attended with a like effect in those parts.'

In spite of great deficiencies in the service, the revenue of the Post-office, says Lord Macaulay, was from the first increasing. In the year of the Restoration, a Committee of the House of Commons, after strict inquiry, had estimated the net receipt to be about twenty thousand pounds. At the close of the reign of Charles II., the net receipt was little short of fifty thousand pounds, the gross receipt being about seventy thousand. But these proceeds, it must be remembered, came partly from the monopoly of post-horses for travellers, which appears at this date to have been a considerable source of profit. The monopoly was retained until the year 1779; but as it attached only to horses for riding, and not for drawing carriages, its profits gradually dwindled. About the year 1683, Robert Murray, an upholsterer of London, set up a penny post, which delivered letters and parcels six or eight times a day in the busy and crowded streets near the Exchange, and four times a day in the outskirts of the capital, the Royal Post-office having made no provision for correspondence between one part of London and another. This undertaking he assigned to William Dockwra; but as soon as it became clear that the speculation would be lucrative, the Duke of York, on whom the whole net revenue of the Post-office had been settled by his brother, complained of the penny-post as an infraction of his monopoly, and the courts of law decided in his favour. Murray's invention, which had not been established without a large outlay, was thus wrested from Dockwra, and its profits went to swell the income of the Duke. But the fusion of the two systems was imperfect, the letter-carrier belonging to each being still confined to their former duties. This division of labour, which had been unavoidable while the two establishments were separate, became after their union absurd. Two letter-carriers, one of each class, would often

be found in the same street, and not seldom would meet at the same door; whereas if one had handed over his letters to the other, and had then retired, the work might have been performed just as well. Or if the walk had been divided between the two, the inhabitants of the metropolis would have received an adequate return for the double salary in the accelerated delivery of their letters, which in those days and for a century onwards was a duty performed with tardiness and great uncertainty as to the particular hour. The rule was, not to begin the distribution until every post had arrived, an event which, owing to the bad state of the roads and to other hindrances, frequent robbery of the mails being among the number, was subject to constant variation. It would hardly obtain belief but for the notoriety of the fact, that the waste of labour just pointed out, which to the public was a waste of money constantly increasing, survived to the year 1854. So dear from long association had this absurdity become to men in office, that although it was attacked in the Report of Commissioners of Inquiry as early as 1829, and although its abolition was an object of earnest desire with the author of Penny Postage, who included the change in his project when he submitted it to the nation and to Parliament, yet it was not until fourteen years after he entered upon the administration of the Post-office that he was able to overcome the impediments which the usage of nearly two centuries had accumulated in the way of this obvious improvement: so all but unextinguishable is the vitality of abuses which have the good fortune either to be self-evident, or to be clearly demonstrated!

Reluctantly passing over events of interest, I pause for a moment at the year 1720. Up to this date the lines of postal communication had been radial from each metropolis of the three kingdoms, the number of cross posts being inconsiderable. But in that year the well-known Ralph Allen, then at the head of the Bath Post-office, made a contract with the Government to establish a cross post between the City of Exeter and that of Chester by way of Bristol, Gloucester, and Worcester; thus connecting the West of England with the mail route to Ireland, and giving postal intercommunication with many towns of importance. His terms were to bear himself all the cost of the service, to pay

a fixed rent, and to retain the surplus. This contract was renewed and extended from time to time so as to include other branches of road, and it terminated only with his death in 1764. According to Mr. Palmer (a great name in the annals of the Post-office), who professes to speak from a narrative in his possession, written by Mr. Allen himself, the net profits of this contract to its holder amounted to 12,000*l.* a year, or in the total to rather more than half a million sterling! What inventive powers were displayed by the contractor, or what were the improvements introduced by him into the management of cross posts, I have not been able to learn. But however great his merits, they can hardly have been superior to his good fortune, which was not confined to his pecuniary gains. He is perhaps yet more enviable in having accomplished his objects without controversy. Entering the Post-office by the wicket-gate, and not by leaping over the wall, he excited no jealousy among the powerful body of officers attached to the department, but, on the contrary, had all the advantage of their *esprit de corps.* It is no secret that the hearty co-operation of experienced officers will rarely fail in removing every obstacle incident to carrying a new measure into practice, if that measure be sound in principle; or that hostility, whether openly manifested or concealed under the guise of good-will brought to a stand by insuperable difficulties, may ensure defeat to the same enterprise. Further, it will be obvious to such as are acquainted with the biography of this good man—the Allworthy of *Tom Jones*—that even greater happiness than his exemption from the bitterness of controversy must have flowed from the large-hearted generosity with which he diffused his wealth. He won the friendship of Chatham. Pope, Warburton, and Fielding were his companions, deriving benefit from his purse and his exertions in their behalf. To Fielding indeed, and to his family, left unprovided for at his death, Allen was a munificent benefactor.

I have dwelt on this instance of unclouded good fortune in the career of postal reformers, because it is the only one presented by the history of the Post-office from its foundation to the present day.

Eighteen years after the death of Allen appears John Palmer. Like Prideaux and Murray, Palmer was a stranger

to the institution which he aspired to improve. He was the proprietor and manager of the theatres of Bristol and Bath. Struck with the intolerable slowness and the countless other defects in the transmission of letters, and aware that stage-coaches and other vehicles for the conveyance of passengers far outstripped the post-boys travelling on horseback, the mode in which the inland service was then chiefly conducted, he devised, with great skill, and with a thorough knowledge of his subject, a variety of comprehensive measures for raising postal communication to as high a pitch of excellence as the expedients then at command permitted. His main object seems to have been to extract the largest possible amount of revenue which correspondence could be made to yield; but he was thoroughly embued with the conviction that the means to such an end were to perfect the service in every one of its branches, thereby furnishing to the public an article so good that a high price for it should be cheerfully paid. The most obvious feature in his plans was the substitution of mail coaches for boys on horseback or for mail carts. But it were to wrong his memory to found his reputation on that one change. Many improvements which cannot be described without tedious explanations, and to understand the value of which would imply a knowledge of details certainly not possessed by myself, and probably by very few of my hearers, cost him, I dare to say, more labour of thought and research than the one by which he is known to posterity.

No sooner did he reveal his plans than the Post-office declared war. I have read the story of his conflict, so far as it has been recorded, with mingled feelings of disgust and amusement. Every artificial regulation of the service was mistaken by Palmer's opponents for a law of nature, and reasoning upon this foundation, they quickly proved to their own entire satisfaction that the scheme was impracticable—indeed, most fortunately so, since both the revenue and the interests of commerce were thus protected from utter destruction at the hands of ignorant strangers, whom the Chinese would, in a similar spirit to their own, call outside barbarians! Fortunately Palmer had to do with a Minister who inherited from his father a contempt for impossibilities. When stretched upon his bed in the agony of gout, it was reported to Chatham that one of his official subordinates pronounced

an order impossible of execution. 'Tell him,' said he rising up, and marching across the room on his swollen feet, his face streaming with perspiration from the excruciating effort, 'tell him it is the order of a man who treads upon impossibilities!'

Pitt, the son, adopted the new plans, and Mr. Palmer was employed to carry them into execution. With great labour, with an absolute devotion of time and health to the service, Palmer overcame innumerable obstructions to his acquirement of the minute knowledge essential to the framing of arrangements which should work smoothly in the hands of unwilling agents, and in 1784 the first mail coach performed its journey from London to Bristol. But his opponents were far from subdued. They bided their time; and two years afterwards, when his plans were yet only in partial operation, the season at which the chances of attack on a new project stand at their maximum, Palmer had to encounter another struggle, and was defeated. Still the Minister, although he gave up the inventor, retained the invention. And here let me admit that Palmer had not been proof against the temptation to carry his objects by indirect means, whereby he weakened the hands of his great protector. Time does not permit me to tell the story of Palmer's fall. It had been agreed that he was to have 1500*l.* a year for his personal services, and two and a half per cent. upon all excess of revenue beyond a fixed sum. When ejected from the Post-office, not only did his salary terminate, but instead of his two and a half per cent., he was obliged to accept a life annuity of 3000*l.* This amount, which, if measured by later scales of reward, may appear a large concession, was, even at that early date, below the proceeds of his per-centage, while the rapidly advancing revenue soon made the difference far wider. He never ceased to protest against this treatment. His son, General Palmer, urged his claims from time to time upon the House of Commons, and in the year 1813, five years prior to his father's death, succeeded in obtaining by way of compromise a grant for 50,000*l.* What deductions from that sum ought to be made in respect of the costs of this conflict, so often renewed, I know not; but my experience as counsel for twenty years in the case of the Baron de Bode leads me to the conclusion that the balance in Palmer's favour could not be large; and that the best feature in the General's

victory was a Parliamentary verdict that his father's claim was just, and that the all-powerful authorities arrayed against him had been in the wrong.

That the dismissal of Palmer should not have been followed by the abandonment of his plans, so far as they had been carried into operation, was fortunate for the country, and must to some extent have allayed the mortification of their author. But while the increase of the revenue, and the obvious benefits to commerce and to all other interests promoted by correspondence, secured the vigilant supervision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, yet the loss of the original thinker to whom the improvements owed their birth must have wrought most injuriously on the affairs of the department. And although it could not destroy what Palmer had accomplished, yet in all probability it deprived the nation of much that such a man would have achieved if he had been maintained in his position; still more, if he had been left to the unfettered exercise of his talent and energy.

To what foster-parents the young system was consigned on the loss of its father, may be gathered from certain criticisms proffered by the gentlemen of the Post-office on Palmer's proposals, after they had had some brief and partial trial. Mr. Draper objects to mail coaches as running too fast. He declares that the post cannot travel with the expedition of chaises and diligences, on account of the business needing to be done at the office in each town through which it passes—the fearful velocity which Mr Draper deprecates rising possibly to six, or in some cases even to seven miles an hour! Be it remembered, however, that prior to Mr. Palmer's innovations, the average rate of the mail (including stoppages) was only three miles and a half per hour; which, in the opinion of the office, left nothing to be desired! In truth, speed appears to have been looked upon with great suspicion. Palmer had maintained that the post should outstrip all other conveyances; but the judicious Mr. Hodgson says:—'I do not see why the post *should* be the swiftest conveyance. Personal conveyances, I apprehend, should be much more, and particularly with people travelling on business.' Palmer, with his speculative notions, had objected to robberies of the mail, then, to be sure, very numerous and expensive, not only to the plundered correspondents, but to the department, a

single prosecution having cost 4000*l.* He suggests the employment of a guard. Practical knowledge, however speaking by the lips of the officers, scouts the proposal of a guard, who 'would have to be waited for at every alehouse he should pass by,' and suggests, as the only expedient for mitigating an evil which could not be overcome, that correspondents should cut bills of exchange and bank-notes in two, and send each half by a different post, adding that 'there are no other means of preventing robbery with effect, as the strongest cart that could be made, lined and bound with iron, had been quickly broken open by a robber:' further as an admonition against futile attempts at safety, we are solemnly warned that when desperate fellows have once determined upon a mail robbery, the consequence of resistance will be murder! Thus, the faithful officers make a stand in united front against the scheme, which they denounce as 'chimerical;' which they predict 'will fling the commercial correspondence of the country into the utmost confusion,' and 'will,' they affirm, 'justly raise such a clamour as the Postmaster-General will not be able to appease!'

On the other hand, we are kindly solaced with the assurance that 'the constant watch which has been kept on the improvement of the Post-office, in all situations and under all circumstances, has made it now almost as perfect as can be without exhausting the revenue arising therefrom.' The acmé of perfection having been thus laboriously reached, no wonder a thoughtless proposal by Mr. Palmer, to receive and consider the suggestions of commercial men as to the management of the posts in their respective neighbourhoods, should have been rejected with scorn. 'It is not probable,' says Mr. Hodgson, 'that any set of gentlemen, merchants or out-riders, can instruct officers brought up in the business of the Post-office. And it is particularly to be hoped, if not presumed, that the surveyors need no such information.'

I grieve that its length compels me to omit all but the first words of a wonderful piece of argumentation by the same ingenious person. Probably, however, from my sample my hearers may form some estimate of the value of the bulk. 'But suppose,' he says, 'an impossibility, viz., that the Bath mail could be brought to London in sixteen or eighteen hours!'—the distance by which Bath and London are sepa-

rated being just one hundred and eight miles! These hoary sages, it is evident, were persuaded that they had drunk from the fountain-head of official knowledge,

> Till old experience did attain
> To something like prophetick strain.

Let it be noted, however, that every prophecy was signally falsified.

Among 'the ills that flesh is heir to,' there are few more difficult to bear with equanimity than that endured by an inventor in beholding his thriving offspring snatched from his tutelage and given over to narrow-minded opponents, who gladly torment it, and who, even if they wished it well, would be utterly incompetent to carry their good intentions into effect. On the contrary, they would endanger its life by experiments begun without forecast and conducted without caution. Though not to be stigmatised as wicked, yet the tender mercies of such are cruel, and would remind the thoughtful spectator how the Brobdingnagian monkey handled poor Gulliver, when, mistaking him for a young one of its own species, it seized and carried him out upon a roof five hundred yards from the ground, set him on the perilous ridge, and in all kindness crammed him with repulsive and odious morsels!

Palmer found the net annual revenue of the Post-office about 150,000*l.* By the year 1814, in the face of an enhanced tariff, it had risen tenfold, namely, to 1,500,000*l.*, an augmentation chiefly attributable to the greater speed and punctuality secured by his improvements, though aided unquestionably by the national advancement in population and wealth. But thenceforward, until the epoch of penny postage, the impulse given to the increase of letters by the causes pointed out, and indeed by all others, especially by Macadam's admirable invention for bettering our roads, which enabled the mails to attain a rate of ten miles an hour including stoppages, proves to have become all but exhausted. For twenty years the number of letters passing through the Post-office remained well nigh stationary, amidst the rapid development of our manufactures and our commerce, the concentration of the national mind on the arts of peace, the consequent expansion of correspondence, and the innumerable

facilities for its distribution which had been thus created, and had been necessarily displayed before the slumberous eyes of the postal authorities—legitimate successors of the *faineant* dynasty whose *vis inertiæ* Palmer had found was not to be overcome.

As postboys on horseback had been superseded by the more rapid mail-coach, which had surpassed the means of transit furnished by the stimulus of open competition, so in its turn emulation once more gradually improved stage-coaches, until the Government mail again lagged behind. In this state of things penal laws were set at defiance, and the number of contraband letters became enormous. On one occasion, the agents of the Post-office made a seizure of eleven hundred such letters, which they found in a single bag in the warehouse of certain eminent London carriers. The head of the firm hastened to seek an interview with the highest authority in St. Martin's-le-Grand, and proffered instant payment of 500*l.* by way of composition for the penalties incurred, accompanying his offer with a stipulation that the letters, being thus redeemed, should be despatched through the Post-office that night. He averred, no doubt with truth, that the delay of so much correspondence might expose both senders and receivers to great inconvenience, loss, and possibly to ruin. The terms were accepted.

So rigorous was the system of repression, that it extended to cases in which the object of sending a particular letter could not be obtained through the medium of the Post-office, A merchant at Hull had an auxiliary establishment at Goole. In one instance his clerk stationed there found it requisite to communicate with his employer more promptly than was possible by course of post, in order to enable the latter to send out advices to Hamburgh by a vessel then about to sail. He wrote by a carrier. The contraband letter was seized. The principal did not protect his agent, and the man was thrown into prison, for an amount of penalty far beyond his means to discharge. After he had lain there some months, his friends applied to me, as Member for Hull, to intercede with the authorities, which I did, but found them inexorable. The genius of the Post-office turned eyes of stone upon me, like those with which Dido met the faithless Æneas in the shades:—

Illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat:
Nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur,
Quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.

But in spite of harsh laws harshly executed, of a straitened service, and of exorbitant rates, the Post-office still remained a popular and respected institution. I remember once when insisting, in conversation with Lord Abinger, the Chief Baron, on the necessity for postal reform, he answered, 'I always bear in mind the opinion which the Duke of Wellington holds, and that is, that the English Post-office is the only one in Europe which can be said to do its work;' and Lord Abinger intimated that so long as it bore that character, we must pause before we ventured upon changes.

At length, however, the office discovered that it had traded too long on its reputation. Murmurs were heard among the people, and the discontented found a champion in the late Mr. Wallace, then Member of Parliament for Greenock, who frequently called the attention of the House to the preposterous rates of our postage. For a long time, however, he called attention much more frequently than he gained it. Still, the desire for change grew with a steady growth. In the year 1837, Mr. Rowland Hill, then filling the position of Secretary to the Commissioners for managing the affairs of South Australia, a person scarcely known beyond the circle of his family and his friends, put forth a scheme of postal reform, which, being named after its most striking feature, is called Penny Postage. He proposed the uniform rate of a penny for all letters under half an ounce, to whatever part of the United Kingdom they might be carried. Hitherto, if a letter consisted of two pieces of paper, however small, it was charged double postage, that is to say, if it went to Edinburgh it would cost 2*s.* 3*d.*, the rate for a single letter being 1*s.* 1½*d.* Treble letters paid treble postage; quadruple letters and all other multiples paid according to weight, but on a scale still increasing in proportion to distance. Taking all matters into account, he struck an average, whence it appeared that by his plan the public might command for one penny as much postal service as could be had on the then established rates for ninepence.

A proposal for so vast a reduction, should it escape the peril of contemptuous disregard by reason of its apparent

extravagance, stood a chance of being eagerly embraced by such classes of the community as, not being responsible for the revenue, would naturally confine their contemplation to the relief to be derived from a very low tariff; while financiers were likely to look upon such a project as self-condemned by a reckless contempt of consequences. And so it proved. The people at large, the manufacturing and mercantile classes, the clergy, who witnessed every day the privations endured by the poor for want of a Post-office within their means to use—all united in loud and earnest prayers to the Legislature to confer upon them the boon which had been held up before their eyes. On the other hand, the heads of both the great parties in the State were impressed with the fiscal dangers of the proposed experiment; many believing that the project involved not merely an extinguishment of all revenue from letters, but, in addition, a ruinous subsidy to defray the expenses of the service. Not that Mr. Hill had left his plan unsupported by allegations of fact, and by arguments which, in the event of the facts being sustained in proof, showed that the attractive results promised might be achieved without any ultimate diminution of the net revenue to a more serious extent than some three hundred thousand pounds.

For a long series of years prior to 1837, the state of the Post-office had been a favourite subject of inquiry both by Royal Commissioners and by Parliamentary Committees, although the only very conspicuous product of these investigations was a formidable pile of Blue-books. To Mr. Hill, however, who had never entered a Post-office in his life, these books were a mine of knowledge, requiring, to be sure, very laborious digging, but which nevertheless recompensed him with invaluable information upon the working of the system as then in action; and his acquaintance with postal affairs thus obtained enabled him to frame a set of queries, to some of which, through the intervention of friends who had influence at St. Martin's-le-Grand, he succeeded in procuring answers.

But these were neither abundant nor accurate. For instance, it was essential that he should ascertain, within certain limits, the number of chargeable letters passing through the British Post-offices in each year. No satisfactory information on this head was the Post-office able to afford.

Upon the best *data* within his reach he computed the annual number at about eighty-eight and a half millions; but after some time, having to a certain extent been able to correct his *data*, he revised his estimate, which he finally settled at seventy-nine and a half millions. Meantime, an estimate was attempted by the office, which was announced by the Postmaster-General in the House of Lords to make the true number not more than forty-two or forty-three millions—a computation preposterous on the face of it, because, as the gross amount of postage was at that time 2,340,000*l.*, it would have followed that the average rate of each letter must amount to 1*s.* 1¼*d.*, which every one knew from his own experience to be obviously extravagant.

Towards the close of the same year, 1837, the House of Commons appointed the Committee to which I have referred, to investigate Mr. Hill's plan. In the course of the inquiry, which was pursued throughout the session of 1838, the gentlemen of the Post-office submitted an amended estimate of the number of letters, which brought it up to fifty-eight millions. These figures being sifted were soon shown to be fallacious, and the office again amended its return, augmenting the amount to nearly sixty-seven millions, and finally advancing it to seventy millions. But the Committee, after a most laborious and searching scrutiny, conducted with untiring zeal and with a degree of ability which cannot be too highly appreciated, arrived at the conclusion that the real number was seventy-seven millions and a half. Eventually it was admitted by the Post-office itself to amount to seventy-six millions, which number was finally adopted.

As the scheme of penny postage was based on the understanding that the ultimate loss to the revenue would not exceed three hundred thousand pounds per annum, a tolerably accurate computation of the real number of letters was one of the *data* indispensable to the calculation of the amount of increase in correspondence required to fulfil that condition; it being self-evident that if the Post-office had been correct in its estimate of forty-three millions, the expected multiplication must be very much larger than if the then existing number, as was now conceded, amounted to seventy-six millions. Indeed, the Postmaster-General had contended that a twelvefold increase would be required, while Mr. Hill

calculated that a fivefold increase would suffice. The long-vexed question as to the then existing number of letters having been set at rest, his next step was to enable the Committee to form a judgment as near to the truth as the nature of the subject permitted, regarding the probability that his estimate of a fivefold increase would be realized.

He began by adducing evidence to prove the vast multitude of contraband letters daily conveyed, which, if postage were reduced to a penny, there would be no longer any temptation to transmit through a surreptitious medium.

He then proceeded to show that the number of contraband letters, great as it was, must sink into insignificance when compared with that which the high tariff prevented from being written at all. This, in the opinion of competent witnesses drawn from various ranks and orders of the community, was a prodigious mass, and the soundness of the opinion has been amply verified by experience.

It is believed that on the institution of penny postage, contraband transmission ceased altogether, and yet the first year added but ninety three millions of letters to the seventy-six of the old system; while some portion of this ninety-three must clearly be placed to the account of letters which, but for the reduction in postage, would not have come into existence. How far these ninety-three millions have been surpassed by the augmentations of subsequent years, I will not stop at the present moment to compute, my hearers are well aware that they have exceeded the limits of the wildest aspirations.

But Mr. Hill did not depend altogether on the effect to be produced by swelling the grand total of letters. He laid great stress on diminishing to the Post-office the expense of the service. Of course I mean the cost per letter, not the total expense. *That*, by the expected great increase of correspondence was sure to be enhanced. This important end he proposed to attain by the combination of two expedients. One was what has been called uniformity of postage—that is to say, uniform postage for letters of the same weight. The other, the relief of the office by the employment of stamps from the onerous duty of collecting postage. That both these changes must be highly economical is obvious. The taxation of letters, as it was called, meaning thereby the task of

ascertaining the amount of postage for each letter and registering it upon the letter itself, was a slow and complex process. First, the taxing officer had to ascertain whether the letter were single, double, treble, or if beyond treble, what was its weight. And as the sender often evinced considerable skill in hiding enclosures, it was frequently necessary to hold the letter up to a lamp before an accurate judgment could be formed as to its contents. This task accomplished, the officer was prepared to affix the amount which would be due for a letter which had not to travel beyond the distance marked as lowest upon the scale. But if it had to travel further, he was called upon to vary the postage accordingly. Uniform postage, however, relieved him from the greater part of his duty. All letters bearing a penny stamp, and not reaching half an ounce, instantly pass muster; and as it is found that on the average letters, heavy and light, weigh little more than a quarter of an ounce, the large majority are so far below the half-ounce limit that the clerk seldom resorts to the scales. But the principal item of cost has always been the delivery of letters from house to house. Under the old system, the all but universal usage was for the sender to post his letter unpaid. The inevitable consumption of time thus caused in the collection of postage will be fresh in the memory of a large portion of my readers.

Neither of the two branches of postal service thus cheapened presented any obstacle to the application of the principle of uniformity; but the third, *viz.*, the journey which the letter makes from the office of reception to that of destination, would appear at first sight of necessity to demand different rates of remuneration. No one was prepared to believe that the transit of a letter from St. Martin's-le-Grand to Barnet, the first stage on the road to Edinburgh, would cost, practically, the same as the whole journey; and yet Mr. Hill found, on laborious investigation, that such was the fact—the sum for the whole journey only amounting to one-ninth of a farthing! Thus it is clear that strict justice, to say nothing of convenience to the Post-office (which means economy to the revenue), is more closely approached by making no variation of charge in respect of greater or smaller distances of conveyance, than could be attained by acting on any differential scale imaginable, unless indeed we

had a coinage descending far below farthings. By the result of this investigation, which I think I am justified in calling a discovery, all objections to adopting the principle of uniformity, were fully answered, and Mr. Hill's case was complete.

The Committee reported in his favour, the project was embodied in a Bill, passed the Legislature in the next session, and at the commencement of the year 1840 was carried into effect.

And here space warns me to break off my narrative. I will conclude with a brief comparison of postal affairs as they stood at the publication of Mr. Rowland Hill's plan, with their present state, premising that the results which I have now to exhibit could not have been obtained without hearty and intelligent co-operation on the part of many gentlemen in the Post-office, who, in the discharge of their respective duties, have laboured with ardour and fidelity to promote and perfect the new system. I cannot bring myself to pass their exertions by in utter silence, although I have no space for a more explicit notification of their services.

As late as the year 1839,* out of the two thousand one hundred districts of the Registrars of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England and Wales, about four hundred, then containing 1,500,000 inhabitants, were destitute of a single post office. The average extent of each district was nearly twenty square miles; indeed, several of these postal deserts were considerably larger than the county of Middlesex! The average population of the chief place in each district was 1400, and its average distance from the nearest post office between four and five miles. Yet the ramifications of our postal system pervaded England far more thoroughly than they did the remaining divisions of the United Kingdom. Many other English and Welsh districts, though possessing post offices, were yet so scantily supplied with them in proportion to their area, that in all probability four millions of the population of England and Wales, amounting at that date to one quarter of the whole, must be held to have been destitute of postal accommodation.

The great extent of the deficiency may be also gathered from this single fact, that while England and Wales contain

* This state of things was continued as late as 1843.

about eleven thousand parishes, the total number of their post offices of all descriptions was only three thousand. Constant additions are now making, and doubtless will always continue to be made. At the present day the comparison stands thus: the number in England and Wales, instead of three thousand, is (including pillar-boxes) raised to eleven thousand, making it scarcely possible that any one of the Registrars' districts should now remain unsupplied with a post office. While the numbers in England and Wales have thus rapidly increased, those of Scotland and Ireland have also received considerable augmentation, the number in the United Kingdom having risen from 4518 to 14,358.*

In 1837 Mr. Hill suggested the institution of day mails. Prior to this improvement, letters passing through London (say from Liverpool to Dover or Brighton) arriving in the early morning and waiting for the evening mail lay fourteen hours at St. Martin's-le-Grand, whereas now a mail by day, as well as by night, is despatched to most of the towns in England and Wales, and to many in Scotland and Ireland. A large number have the advantage of two day mails, and some have even three or more.

In the Metropolis, under the old system, there were but six deliveries per diem; there are now eleven. So late as in 1842, a letter posted at any receiving-office in London after two in the afternoon was not delivered, even at so short a distance as that of Brompton, until the next morning. At present, a letter can be posted up to six o'clock, and still be delivered the same night, at any place within a circle of six miles from St. Martin's-le-Grand. Meanwhile, the number of deliveries in the country part of the area stretching twelve miles from the General Post Office has been much increased, several of these places now having six.

The measure which rendered these improvements practicable was the division of the Metropolis into ten postal districts. It came into partial operation in the year 1856, and is now almost complete.† Each of these districts is treated as a separate post town. Formerly every letter

* In 1868 the number was 17,741. (Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster-General.)

† It was subsequently completed, but after my resignation the number of districts was for very insufficient reasons reduced to eight.

posted within the twelve-mile circle was, with few exceptions, carried from the receiving-houses to St. Martin's-le-Grand, there to be sorted and redistributed. But now the letters, when collected from the receiving-boxes, are conveyed at once to the principal office of the district in which they are posted—those for that district being delivered forthwith, the others being forwarded direct to the chief office of their respective districts. Thus a letter from Cavendish Square to Grosvenor Square, instead of travelling, as formerly, to and from St. Martin's-le-Grand, a distance, counting both journeys, of four or five miles, has not now to travel more than about half a mile. How much the new arrangement has expedited the exchange of letter and answer, my hearers can judge for themselves. Certain it is that it has been followed by a vast and rapid increase in this class, *i.e.*, letters both posted and delivered within the London district. During the five years preceding 1856 the average annual advance in the number of Metropolitan letters was only 3¾ per cent. Since that year it has been upwards of 7 per cent., and in 1858 rose to 12 per cent. These letters now exceed the total number from all sources—home or foreign—delivered throughout the whole island of Great Britain (London included) in the year 1839. They amount to sixty-eight millions,* being only eight millions less than the grand total in the United Kingdom for that year. Subdividing London has also effected a considerable acceleration in the first delivery of each day—by far the most important, as it includes letters from all parts, in addition to those posted in the Metropolis. The letters for London arriving about five o'clock in the morning at the terminus of each railway, instead of being all conveyed, as heretofore, to St. Martin's-le-Grand, are now with few exceptions carried direct to the chief office of each of the ten postal districts, in the separate

* Now (1868) the number is probably about one hundred millions, but, unfortunately, the statistics of the department, as given in the recent Annual Reports, are so incomplete, that I cannot state the number accurately. There can be no doubt, however, that it greatly exceeds the whole number of letters delivered in the United Kingdom in 1839. It is a remarkable fact that by the year 1865 the number of district letters had so increased as to equal that of letters for the district arriving from without—that, in other words, the residents within the London district have as much postal correspondence with one another as with all the world beside

bags into which they have been previously sorted, either at the country offices, or in the travelling post office during their journey. The first delivery is now completed by 9 A.M., the hour at which, so lately as the year 1843, it only began.

Postage to and from the Colonies and foreign parts has been much lowered, while the transit has been greatly quickened. The tariff for a letter to a town in Canada, India, or Australia, or in any other British Colony, is less than that charged up to 1840 on a letter from London to Reading or Chatham. In 1839 the lowest postage on a letter from London to Paris was 1*s.* 8*d.*, and on one from London to Marseilles 2*s.* 1*d.*, the charge to either city being now only fourpence.

In 1839 the number of newspapers delivered by the Post Office throughout the United Kingdom was about forty-four and a half millions. At that date every copy by law bore a stamp, which, however, had the advantage of franking it when sent by post. This privilege furnished a strong motive to proprietors and newsmen to distribute their impressions through that channel, whereas at present, if copies are sent by any other means than through the post, no expense is incurred in stamps. Nevertheless the number despatched through the Post Office last year reached seventy-two millions and a half. This fact puts in a striking light the wonderful spread of journals at the present day, since the facilities for cheaply and rapidly distributing them through the land in other ways have been so greatly multiplied. In all probability the seventy-two and a half millions passing through the Post Office are but a small proportion of the whole number published.

The privilege of sending books and works of art by post at a reasonable charge is another of Mr. Hill's improvements. I may add that medicines, watches, patterns, botanical specimens, seeds, and many other articles, now pass largely through the Office, to the convenience of all, but more especially to that of residents in the country; for it is not undervaluing the great benefits we have derived from railways to remark that they do not, and probably never can without the aid of the Post Office, distribute parcels even to all our towns, much less to our villages and single houses;

whereas the proportion of letters and other postal packets delivered by the letter-carriers at the homes of those to whom they are addressed is now probably not less than ninety-five per cent. of the total number despatched. Of late years the rapid development of the book-post has been remarkable. The book-post dates from 1848. In 1854 the number of such packets was only 750,000, yet last year it had swollen to 12,000,000.*

An important branch of the service largely developed since the institution of penny postage, is the system of money orders. In 1839 the total number issued for the United Kingdom was 188,921, and the amount of money 313,124*l.* In 1861 the number reached 7,580,455, the amount in money being 14,616,348*l.*† And during that interval, although the prices of money orders have been reduced one half, the growth of the system has been accompanied by a change most advantageous to the department. In the earlier years the service entailed a loss which, for 1847, amounted to 10,000*l.* Last year it brought a profit of 30,000*l.*

Intercommunication of every kind tells upon the increase of letters, and no doubt the last addition to the benefits conferred by the Post-office—namely, its savings-banks, now rapidly spreading over the land—will be followed by similar consequences, to which incidental circumstance I advert, rather than to their far more important purposes, not from underrating these, but because it is too soon to speak of results, respecting which, however, I entertain sanguine hopes. And here I gladly seize the opportunity of adverting to the services of Mr. Sykes, who, although he did not originate the project, yet revived it, and urged its adoption with perseverance and success.

From the various causes thus co-operating to the increase of letters, let us pass to effects.

The number of chargeable letters delivered from the British offices in the last complete year before the reduction of postage was, as I have said, taken at seventy-six millions. The number in 1861 had risen to the stupendous amount of

* The number of newspapers, book packets, and pattern packets, conjointly, as given in the Fifteenth Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, was in 1868 upwards of a hundred millions.

† In 1868 the amount was 19,079,162*l.* (Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster-General.)

five hundred and ninety-three millions, being nearly an eight-fold multiplication of the former number.* The imagination refuses to grapple with figures so enormous; probably, therefore, this vast increase will be more clearly apprehended if I give the following short table, which gives the proportion of letters to population at the two extremes. In 1839 the proportion stood thus: in England and Wales four letters per annum to each individual; in Ireland, one; in Scotland, three; being an average of three to each person in the United Kingdom. In 1861 the average had grown in England and Wales to twenty-four per head, in Ireland to nine, in Scotland to nineteen, being an average of twenty per head for the United Kingdom. It will be felt that a rise from three per head to twenty leads to inferences bearing on the social state of the nation which would of themselves furnish matter for a whole paper. Dwelling on these inferences, the mind would be led to inquiries far too extensive for my present purpose. For instance, are there any facts which would throw light on the proportions in which correspondence is distributed among the various orders of the community, and the effects produced on each? With regard to the upper ranks my hearers will form their own judgment; and such of them as are connected by patronage and superintendence with schools for the poor, adult or juvenile, must know how cheap postage has stimulated the desire to learn the art of writing; while every one of my hearers could probably relate some anecdote which circumstances have brought to his knowledge, as to the operation of penny postage on classes not immediately connected with the higher walks of life. Here is one such regarding the state of things in the Shetland Isles, in May, 1842, little more than two years after the reduction of postage. It is contributed by Mr. Frederic Hill, then Inspector of Prisons for Scotland:

"The Zetlanders are delighted with penny postage. The postmaster told me that the number of letters is astonishing, and that during the six years that steam communication has been in operation it has increased eleven and a half-fold, the greater part of the increase having taken place since the commencement of penny postage. Another gentleman who is well acquainted with the people told me that, although

* In 1868 it was no less than eight hundred and eight millions, or more than ten fold. (Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster-General, p. 4.)

the desire of parents to keep their offspring at home is unusually strong in Zetland, yet that cheap postage has had the effect of reconciling families to the temporary absence of their members, and has thus opened to the islanders the labour market of the mainland."

The enormous increase of correspondence may be placed in still another light. The total weight of letters, exclusive of newspapers and other matter, during the year 1839, was seven hundred and fifty-eight tons. In 1861 it had risen to four thousand three hundred tons. The increase of the average daily mileage of the mails, whether carried by railway, coaches, horses, or on foot, is very striking. It is estimated, although in the absence of records no very close approximation to the truth can be reached, that in 1839 it did not exceed fifty-four thousand miles per diem, whereas in 1861 it has risen to one hundred and fifty-one thousand,* being six times the circumference of the globe; so that although the Post Office still falls short of the activity of Puck, who could "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," yet it performs a similar feat to his every four hours of its existence. This increase would have been much larger but for the circumstance that each trunk railway, like the great North Western, for instance, draws to itself an aggregation of mails which formerly left London by several distinct routes.

The staff of officers of all ranks and both sexes constantly employed in the labours of the Post Office was in 1839, by rough estimate, about eight thousand. In 1861 it was, by exact enumeration, twenty-five thousand four hundred and seventy-three. In addition to this force, many assistants are engaged for a portion of their time.

Let me now compare the gross and the net revenue of the Department as it existed in 1838 and in 1861. The gross revenue in 1838 was 2,346,278*l.*; in 1861 upwards of three millions and a half.† Hence it appears that notwithstanding the wonderful reduction whereby the public now obtains far more of the article postage for the same price than it did formerly, yet that its expenditure in postage exceeds by more than one-half the amount so spent under the old exorbitant rates. The net revenue for 1838, determined upon the

* The present amount cannot be given, as the item has, for the last six years (1869), been omitted in the Annual Reports.

† In 1867 it was 4,548,000*l.* (Return, 1868, No. 215.)

principles of computation then in use, was 1,659,000*l.*, while the corresponding net revenue for 1861 had regained that sum within 134,000*l.*; so that as regards both gross and net revenue the facts have gone beyond Mr. Hill's original estimate.*

Nor is the promise for the future less brilliant than the experience of the past. Correspondence is still advancing by rapid strides. One incident in this vast accession cannot but give rise to sanguine expectations. Whatever the vicissitudes in our harvests, whatever the fluctuations of our commerce, whether we are in the enjoyment of peace or suffer the privations of war, each revolving year adds to the mass of our correspondence. The tide of our letters, like that from the Pontic to the Propontic Sea, feels no ebb. Eighteen hundred and sixty-one, though by no means a year of general affluence, added an influx of twenty-nine millions—an addition even beyond the average of former years.

Such, then, is the success of penny postage, and such are its prospects—bright and cloudless. Still, though no peril can be discerned, the instinctive feelings of mankind and the lessons of history warn us to be prepared, if not for reverses, at least for some interruption in this course of unexampled good fortune. That, should checks occur they will be casual and transient, we may reasonably expect, since correspondence does not flourish or fade with the changes of manners and fashions. Its growth is governed by causes not peculiar to any one country, but common to all—a truth demonstrated by the rapid spread of the new system throughout the civilized world, everywhere followed by triumphant results. One source of danger is dried up. The Post Office no longer assumes to be perfect, and its conductors have renounced their claim to infallibility. Suggested improvements, if they can sustain the indispensable test of rigid scrutiny, are welcomed, and not, as of old, frowned away. The Department acts under the conviction that to thrive it must keep ahead of all rivals—that it must discard the confidence heretofore placed in legal prohibitions, and seek its continuance of prosperity only by deserving it.

* The net revenue, calculated according to the mode of computation referred to above, was for 1867, the last year for which there is a return according to such computation, 2,127,000*l.*; exceeding that of 1838 by more than 463,000*l.* (Parliamentary Return, No. 215, 1868.)

APPENDIX O. (p. 404.)

Letter to the Lords of the Treasury—Superannuation Grant.

'Hampstead, 17th March, 1864.

'My Lords,

'The Postmaster-General, as requested by your Lordships, has done me the favour to furnish me with a copy of your minute of 11th instant, granting me a special superannuation allowance on retiring from my office as Secretary to the Post Office, and conveying to me the very favourable opinion, which your Lordships are pleased to express, of the manner in which I have discharged my duties.

'It cannot be necessary to assure your Lordships of the deep gratification with which I have received so handsome and elaborate a recognition of my services. I have only to beg that you will be pleased to accept my most respectful thanks.

'In a document so highly complimentary, I hesitate to notice what would appear to be an admission, inadvertently made, to the effect that the adoption of the uniform penny postage was urged by others before the development of my plans. This, I assure your Lordships, is an error; and, as uniformity of rate constitutes the main feature of my plan, I am naturally anxious to place before you the real facts of the case. I trust, therefore, you will pardon me if I request attention to the enclosed memorandum on the subject.

'I need scarcely add, that should the expectations of my medical friends, of improved health from rest, be realised, and any occasion arise in which it may appear to your Lordships that my assistance or advice in further postal improvements may be of advantage, I shall feel honoured by being permitted to place them at your disposal.

'I have, &c.,

'Rowland Hill.

'The Right Hon.
'The Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury,
&c., &c., &c.'

'MEMORANDUM.

'A low and uniform rate of postage forms the most essential feature of my plan of postal reform, and I have no hesitation in stating that its conception originated wholly with myself. To guard against future error, I ask permission to place on record a brief statement of facts.

'The principle of uniformity of rate, now that it has been in successful operation for nearly a quarter of a century, appears, perhaps, simple and obvious; but so far from its having been, as it is sometimes supposed, the happy thought of a moment, it was the result of most laborious investigation on my part. Indeed, a slight consideration will show that its conception necessarily involved a precious discovery, viz., that the cost per letter of mere transit within the limits of the United Kingdom was practically inappreciable, or, at least, that it was not dependent mainly on distance; being, in fact, quite as much dependent on the number of letters contained in the particular mail as on the distance that mail was carried. Indeed, it was shown from careful investigation, that the cost of mere conveyance, even for so great a distance as from London to Edinburgh, was only the 36th part of a penny per letter. From this and other facts it followed that a uniform rate was more just than one varying according to distance. The convenience of uniformity was obvious.

'I may add that when I first entered on the investigations preparatory to the construction of my plan, I myself had no conception of the practicability of a uniform rate; and that the discovery referred to above was as startling to myself as it proved when announced to the public at large.

'A reference to my original pamphlet, a copy of which is, I presume, still in your lordships' possession, or to my evidence before the Select Committee of 1838, appointed to inquire into the practicability of my plans, will show the various steps by which I arrived at the conclsion that a uniform penny rate was at once just and practicable.

'There is but one other person, so far as I am aware, to whom the suggestion of a uniform penny rate has, with even the slightest plausibility, ever been assigned—I refer to the late Mr. Wallace, formerly Member for Greenock, and Chairman

of the Select Committee on Postage in 1838; but though Mr. Wallace frequently urged, among other useful reforms, a great reduction in the postal charges, I can say from personal knowledge that he had no idea whatever of a uniform rate until after the publication of my pamphlet. Indeed, this sufficiently appears from his speech in Parliament in July, 1836, the last occasion on which, before the publication of my pamphlet, he referred to the rates of postage. The following is an extract from 'Hansard' (vol. 35, 3rd series, p. 422):—

* * * * * *

'"At the same time the rates of postage ought to be reduced. It would be proper not to charge more than 3*d.* for any letter sent a distance of 50 miles; for 100 miles, 4*d.* 200 miles, 6*d.*; and the highest rate of postage ought not to be more than 8*d.* or 9*d.* at most."

* * * * * *

'Further evidence upon this point is also in my possession, which can be submitted, should it be deemed necessary.

'ROWLAND HILL.

'Hampstead, 17th March, 1864.'

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